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RELIGION
AND
THE NEXT GENERATION

RELIGION AND THE NEXT GENERATION

By
EDWIN EWART AUBREY
The University of Chicago



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RELIGION AND THE NEXT GENERATION

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TO MY WIFE
GLADYS TOPPING AUBREY



CONTENTS

FOREWORD	ix
I. BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. HOW THE INDIVIDUAL GETS HIS RELIGION	9
III. WHAT RELIGION MEANS.....	27
IV. RELIGIOUS INFANTILISM AND RELIGIOUS MATURITY	45
V. THE SKEPTIC'S SEARCH FOR THE MEANING OF GOD.....	58
VI. PRAYER AS A MEANS OF RELIGIOUS ADJUSTMENT	92
VII. WHAT SIGNIFICANCE HAS JESUS?.....	107
VIII. WHERE OUR RELIGION CAME FROM... ..	123
IX. WHAT THE INTELLECTUAL CAN DO WITH INSTITUTIONAL RELIGION....	161
INDEX	181

FOREWORD

What basic religious help may the parent or teacher give to the young, that will be in line with the best accredited knowledge of the time, and also free from any hypocritical concealment of difficulties? To answer this perplexing question is perhaps beyond the power of any one man. Certainly this book can do no more than suggest possible solutions to that persistent problem of what to teach the next generation about religion.

This approach does not tell the reader *what* to tell the child. It starts, rather, with the study of how the individual actually develops any attitudes, religious or otherwise. Then the attempt is made to discover what part attitudes play in the healthy growth of personality, and especially what is the rôle of religious attitudes. Because religious attitudes involve emotional responses, they are not so easily changed as are one's ideas in physics or as-

tronomy. Many people are held by their emotions to ideas which adult experience does not sanction. Precisely at this point arises the most crucial question which faces the religious career of the intelligent person. Shall intellectual soundness be chosen at the expense of a loss of that power which was found in the emotional drive of earlier beliefs? Or shall the sources of power be retained at the expense of intelligent thinking about the deepest things of life?

Fortunately, these are not the only alternatives. Yet the third possibility does not emerge in most current discussion; because the problem is assumed to be a problem of merely intellectual reconstruction. The present volume tries another approach, the crux of which appears in Chapter IV. How this may be applied in dealing with particular problems is indicated in the subsequent chapters. Chapter VIII is inserted to give the necessary historical perspective for the last chapter's discussion; though it might well be read as an introduction to the whole range of problems presented in the book.

I wish to express my thanks to those who have helped me in the preparation of the book. The entire manuscript was read by Dean Charles W. Gilkey of the University of Chicago, and by my wife; both of whom have made many suggestions in the interests of clarity and effectiveness of presentation. Professor S. J. Case of the University of Chicago has read Chapter VIII and vouched for its historical accuracy. For these readings I am particularly grateful. None of these friends should, however, be made responsible for the opinions expressed here. I am also indebted to my father-in-law, Mr. W. P. Topping, for valuable advice on typographical matters.

EDWIN EWART AUBREY.

Christmas, 1930.



CHAPTER ONE

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

THOUGHTFUL adults face a perpetual dilemma in their dealings with the next generation. Still remembering their own struggle to freedom from outworn ideas gained from well-meaning parents, they are anxious not to impose upon their own children a religious faith doomed to be quickly outmoded. Yet they do not want to deny to their children the benefits that what they loosely call "spiritual values" may yield in well-ordered living. The problem is rendered more acute for many by the fact that they do not know what to offer to the next generation for a philosophy of life.

The college-trained parent goes out from college with a certain *savoir-faire*, versed in at least the general ideas of "being scientifically minded," able to discuss the new morality, trained in objec-

tive judgment of people and their values, free from sentimental nonsense and yet idealistic enough to believe that a fine life *can* be developed when the world is faced realistically. For a while the task of mastering the sciences of nutrition, physiology, and infant psychology is all-absorbing. However, Billy, now grown up to that fluent age of four, begins his endless questions—religious questions they are called by his parents. At last a difficulty, long eluded, has come home to roost! A benevolent agnosticism had served admirably to discuss the questions in college, for agnosticism is an honorable pose and has a touch of modesty about it in a college senior. "There are things we just don't know about—God, immortality, and all the rest." For the "tough-minded" this suspended judgment might suffice; but Billy, what of him?

Hence arises the dilemma. These parents cannot give Billy pat answers they do not themselves believe. This would be intellectual immorality. On the other hand, they do not know just what to tell a little lad who cannot be dismissed with the

sophisticated counsel to suspend his judgment on these matters! The books on child guidance for the most part fill their table of contents full enough, so that a chapter on religious perplexities of children is "not feasible in the space allotted," etc. Psychologists of childhood, with their talk of conditioned reflexes and muscle tensions and emotional fixations are anathema to the religious leaders of the community. How can one ever give a real spiritual foundation when one believes in Behaviorism (with a capital B)!

Let us look at a typical presentation of the new ideals of individual development based on the "behavioristic" assumptions, and see where they carry religious implications. I refer to the experimental Summer Institute of Euthenics at Vassar College. In the Introduction of its Announcement, euthenics is defined as follows:

"Euthenics may be described as the science of efficient living; the study of the controllable environment and its adaptations for the improvement of the individual and hence of the race through increased efficiency, mental and physical.

4 RELIGION AND THE NEXT GENERATION

It represents an attempt to bring together and correlate the resources of modern science which bear upon the problems of living, with special emphasis on the home and family, and to focus the attention of educated men and women upon all that the natural and social sciences, particularly physiology, psychology, and economics, have to contribute toward human welfare and world harmony."

Here, then, in practical form is the sort of scientific idealism which John Dewey and others express in more philosophic fashion in their volume on *Creative Intelligence*, and which our young college parents are trying to embody in the training of their boy.

At first glance, such a statement has little enough to do with religion. "Religion," it is said, "is not concerned with 'the controllable environment'; it is rather a matter for crises when the individual cannot do anything to alter the circumstances. Where man's powers end, God's begin." As a matter of historical fact, religion has always shared with science the belief in the controllability of the environment. It is unfortunate that so strong an antithesis

has been made between the two modes of control—the scientific and the religious.

There are two aspects of control. We must have a knowledge of the mechanics of the things with which we are dealing; and we must know what our goal is to be in using them. (Now, it is the function of science to give us knowledge of the processes of nature. Religion relates this knowledge to the goals or ideals of life. This means that science as science can carry on its analyses and experiments without religion. Religion, however, rests upon science for its information. Life demands both.

To return to our quotation above, we may say that religion is at one with eugenics in that it “represents an attempt to bring together and correlate the resources of modern science which bear upon the problems of living.” For this attempt involves an orientation of the individual with reference to his widest potential experience. It is a search for the meaning of life, and thus for the values of life. Religion is, therefore, a form of adjustment; and the quest of the parent is for the con-

ditions of adequate adjustment of his child to that child's widest range of experience.

Now, the problem usually arises in this form: "How can I, who am myself unable to decide these great questions of religion, help my child to a well-adjusted view of life?" Many such perplexed parents send their children to some near-by church school or synagogue and trust to the local religious agencies to provide the child's spiritual training. The risks of this are quickly brought home to the honest parent. If Billy comes back with a repertoire of miracle stories or theological ideas or unscientific notions that positively scandalize the mother, she hopes that these ideas will be outgrown and that in some vague way Billy will be better for having been there. And all the time there keeps knocking at the door of her mind the psychiatrist's warning that these earlier years are crucial in spiritual growth, because it is then that emotions are most easily crystallized around ideas that will later become the foci of serious "complexes."

Other parents will seek out a ready-made liberal theology and feed it to the

youngster as the best available set of ideas, while still others will let the whole question go by default, leaving the child's religious future at the mercy of uneducated servants, chance playmates, or sheer neglect.

There is another way out. It is harder than any of the others. It seeks to find the meanings of life in terms of the child's own experience. The parent must first pick up the unsolved problem of college days and work it through. There is no substitute for this parental obligation to the child—no set prayers, no second-hand dispensing of "approved" ideas, no relegation of the whole task to other people.

But how can a parent's attack on his or her own problem possibly help Billy, if the child is not to have parental ideas and solutions imposed on him? It can help in this way. The task of religious adjustment is the job of thinking through the meaning of life to its ultimates. This task is significant not only for the particular ultimate values reached, but also for what the process of thinking life through does to the honest thinker, and further for the

grasp it gives the thinking parent on the sorts of adjustments that have to be made. Now, this last is the greatest contribution anyone can make to the spiritual welfare of the next generation.

This little volume is written for parents who wish suggestive helps rather than ready-made answers. The author has planned the book in terms of such a reader's problems.

Accordingly, this book aims (1) to help toward the understanding of the nature of individual religious experience; (2) to seek such an understanding as far as possible in terms of processes which are subject to scientific observation and control; and (3) to secure for the individual an interpretation of religious experience which shall be capable of continuous growth, independent of any parental fixations of religious attitude or belief, receptive to all scientific findings of the future, and related to the whole life of the individual as a normal attempt to give life a healthy meaning and direction.



CHAPTER TWO

HOW THE INDIVIDUAL GETS HIS RELIGION

MEN have always wondered how they came to have religious attitudes, but not until the advent of modern psychology did they grasp the importance of finding out. For the study of the origins of religious attitudes is now seen to be the clue of their proper adjustment. If history has shown us anything conclusive, it is that religious experience is a phase of normal human behavior and that the sources of religion are to be found in life itself.¹ Let us, therefore, start with life in its simplest psychological terms and see if we can trace the growth of the religious sentiment.

I

The surest observation that can be made about the newborn infant is that it

¹See also ch. VIII.

is sensitive and responsive. If, because of some structural defect, it is lacking in sensitivity or in capacity for response it will never live fully; it will be a defective or subnormal child. Granted its normal capacity to sense and to respond, the earliest responses will be simple motor reactions—breathing, sucking, grasping, and the like. It will be making simple motor reactions all its life, but most of these responses will not be conscious for they will persist as habits. Very early, however, there appear situations in which two or more stimuli appear simultaneously. There will be complications in life, and each stimulus, if it has a place in any habit, will call forth its appropriate response. But, alas! the complication will arise when the respective responses conflict with one another. There will be a struggle between two opposing tendencies to move in different directions. A sort of traffic jam in the nervous system ensues, and the symptoms of emotion appear in the form of “a sinking sensation” in the vital organs. This is a new variety of reac-

tion to situations and we speak of it as an emotional response.

When such an emotional arousal occurs three things may happen: the "jam" will persist with a paralysis of the system, or the stronger tendency will push its way through, or recourse will be taken to an elaborate process which we call thinking. In the last case the inhibited responses will be rehearsed in imagination. Have you ever turned the knob of a familiar door, pushed, and *failed* to pass through because it did not "give"? What happens? Well, first you will probably push harder. If this does not avail, you may stop and study the situation. First there arises, if you have had experience with locked doors, the mental picture of an extra piece of metal across the door, holding it. But another push shows that it does not stick at the lock, but near the floor. Another picture appears of a human foot set against the door on the other side. More cause of sticky varnish or because it is experimenting fails to surprise the imagined resister, and it is finally decided that the door has stuck in its frame be-

swollen with dampness. This process of thinking may develop to the point where no overt experimenting takes place at all, but where we sit down and "canvass the possibilities." This rehearsal of possible responses in telescoped form constitutes the third sort of response, which we call intellectual.

Now these responses may be "conditioned," as the psychologists say, by attendant circumstances. Simple forms of this process of conditioning have been shown by the great Russian psychologist, Pavlov. He showed, for instance, how by ringing a bell at the same moment as meat was presented to a dog it was possible, after repeated association of the bell-ringing and the meat-smelling, to induce a mouth-watering in the dog in response to the bell alone. This seems to be the basis of the old adage in teaching that we must proceed from the familiar to the unfamiliar if we are to have a confident learner.

✓ By direct associations of satisfaction the child can be induced to react positively to practically any object, person, or idea. Of course, "satisfaction" is a very flexible

term; it includes not only mere physical pleasure, but social approval, the sense of accomplishment, etc. Conversely, by "painful" or inhibiting associations it is possible to induce negative reactions to almost any object in childhood. The annals of psychiatry are replete with instances of adults who suffer from acute prejudices against certain kinds of actions or things because of unfortunate childhood associations with those objects or actions.

By the same token, emotions are transferred from one thing to another—from a beloved mother to her ideas, from a hated enemy to his manner of speech. A great deal of the child's mental growth takes place in this way, and this accounts for many of the strange likes and dislikes which the youngster manifests. Given two objects in immediate juxtaposition, a transfer of emotion takes place easily. Yet it is possible to carry the deliberate use of this principle too far. By associating a satisfying experience with too many unpleasant tasks or objects, the parent may either wear out the appeal or even

secure a complete reversal, so that the satisfying experience itself becomes displeasing. We all know the let-down which followed the war period with its patriotic drives. People were tired of drives. Appeals had been made to the point of satiety, and the nation failed to make any further responses. Again, we all know cases of people who, because condemnation attended all the interesting things they did as children, actually reversed their moral standards in the attitude that if anything were condemned it must be interesting. Thus puritanical parents often produce profligates. Perhaps this is why many people never attend church—because it was compulsory for them as children, and the unhappiness of compulsion was transferred to religion.

This is how attitudes develop, by the organization of emotional reactions around certain persons, objects, or ideas. The attitude of patriotism, for instance, consists of a mixture of emotions organized with reference to one's country, so that it is partly a desire for security, partly the wish to be approved by other citizens,

and partly devotion to a national ideal of achievement.

It follows from this that attitudes may grow by the transfer of emotions from old objects to new. A study of war-time enlistment posters is very enlightening in this connection. There was the call to fight "for hearth and home" which transferred loyalty from the family to the army. There was the navy poster of the pretty girl in a sailor's uniform, with the quotation, "Gee! I wish I was a man; I'd join the Navy"; which translated the civilian's regard for his ideal girl into naval service. "Join the Navy and see the world," is an appeal to curiosity and adventuresomeness in the name of national service (even if one see the world mainly through a porthole).

Or again, attitudes may be created by the appearance of new emotions in an old context, as when the Stars and Stripes, common enough in the home town on holidays, acquires a new value when it is seen flying over a United States embassy to which an American refugee is fleeing from an anti-foreign mob in a far country.

But what has all this to do with religion? Well, religion in the individual is an attitude. Those who speak of "the religious sentiment" are more accurate psychologically than those who speak of a religious instinct; for one's religious response is a very complicated organization of the emotions around some object regarded as of supreme importance. Furthermore, there is nothing uniform about religious behavior. Different peoples worship different objects—Buddha, Christ, Jehovah, Tao, totem, or natural law. Again, there are different emotions which dominate in different people, and in one person at different times. Perhaps, in our attention to the variety of religious objects, we have tended to ignore the variety of religious emotions; and perhaps some of the realignment of Christian groupings is on the basis of the dominant emotion. For instance, some people find in religion a haven of safety from a terrible world, while others see in it a great adventure into the unknown, and some find the power of personal faith in the joy of intimacy with a God of comradeship, while

others see God as the approving or disapproving judge of all their actions. These need not be mutually inconsistent but the dominant desire will determine what a man's religion does to him, whether to give him refuge or a challenge, quietness or a restless conscience. Precisely because religion does vary so from one man to another, it is fallacious to suppose that one specific type of religious experience must be undergone by all men. To insist upon a stereotyped religious experience for all is to forget that persons are individual and unique.

II

There are two aspects of one's religious experience. We achieve or "happen upon" religious experiences which we cannot trace to any conventional backgrounds; these experiences, therefore, seem "original." Other religious experiences we are definitely trained in, or can at least secure from others. The former is not first in point of time, but it is here discussed first for the sake of convenience. These "original" religious experiences—before a new

and weird scene, or in the exaltation of a love unknown before, or some mysterious happiness that floods in upon an idler on the mountain peak—are very hard to identify. They may be more stereotyped than we suppose, arising from our readings in travelogues and love lyrics; or they may be due to some unconscious connection with childhood scenes or mother-love. Yet they are possible. There is, no doubt, some element of transference of emotion accomplished through a common item which taps a former attitude. But this does not destroy the originality or uniqueness of the experience, if new experiences are assimilated around the nucleus. New ways of “finding God” may rest upon old ways and familiar experiences without losing their uniqueness. For those who have enjoyed them these experiences have discovered new meanings in their world, which may become the profoundest influences in one’s development.

Men depend for their religious experience mainly on educational influences. Very early in life an emotional transfer is made from parents to the conceptions and

values which the parents espouse. Many adults never find religious values in their own independent experience (perhaps because their parents never taught them how), and they cling to their parents' faith. "The old-time religion was good enough for father . . . it is good enough for me." Or in that adolescent revolt against parental domination an ancestral faith may go, not because of any perceived weakness, but simply because it has been associated with the parent whose hold is being broken in the name of freedom for development. It took the author several years of teaching to discover that a college girl's conflict between religion and science was very often in reality a conflict between attachment to parents and attachment to college chums; the supposed conflict was really a projection of the underlying problem of social adjustment, and sociological rather than theological discussion always helped more in such cases.

It is frequently assumed by psychiatrists that a faith secured by such transference is undesirable, but this does not follow. That such a means of gaining con-

victions is inevitable is clear; but the test of the conviction is to be sought not in its origin alone, but in its value in personal social adjustment. On the other hand, the psychiatrist is correct in warning against convictions held merely through infantile attachments; to be valid they must be tested in one's adult world. Here lies one of the gravest dangers in religion—a danger from which even many friendly scientists are not free, the danger of infantilism in religion. With this problem we shall deal later in this volume.

Fortunately or unfortunately, the individual soon finds out that religion is largely an affair of institutions, such as church and synagogue. His own attitudes are highly conditioned by the religious attitudes of parents, playmates, teachers, and servants, and their attitudes in turn are institutional products. For in his adventures in social adjustment he encounters those habits of society which we call institutions. Just as his own personal habits sum up, in capsule form as it were, his past experimentation, so institutions sum up the past experience of society. To sup-

pose that either he or society itself can ignore these institutions is to forget what help habits give us in our development. For the habits we acquire are useful to us because they enable us to turn our attention to new problems which call for solving. To try to dispense with institutions is as futile as to try to write letters without an alphabet or grammar, or to explore new territory without a geography: we should waste time going over laboriously learned accomplishments of the past. Some people are like ignorant explorers in their religion in that they do not know enough about church history to realize that their own newly-found experiences were capitalized long ago by religious institutions. Through lack of historical perspective they seem to forget that their own contemporary cultural mansion had foundations just because these foundations have been covered by recent landscaping.

What, then, are these religious institutions in which past experience is deposited? How did they survive into the present? The answer is truly surprising, although it is obvious. People have been

loyal to these institutions, building up within themselves attitudes of devotion to the purpose for which the institutions stand. For in the last analysis, the strength of institutions (law, marriage, religion) is to be sought in the steadiness of the attitudes of people. (As Professor Charles H. Cooley once put it, institutions exist in the individuals as habits of mind and ✓ action. Religious institutions rest upon religious habits of groups of people.

In his social contacts, therefore, the individual encounters the religious habits of his group, and thus the religious institutions of his group. What have they to do with his own religious growth? Two things: in the first place, provided that they are influential (that is, that enough people adhere to them), they embody the accepted ways of expressing and organizing the religious attitude; in the second place, they are attempts to make the ✓ purpose of religion effective in the conditions of life which he faces.

Some readers will, of course, immediately reply that the church, outworn and ineffective, is a handicap to individ-

ual religious growth. To this question we must return later in the book. For the moment let us simply note that, while the church has always been in part outworn, it has been changing constantly in a search for greater effectiveness, and that these fruitful changes have come about through precisely this dissatisfaction which these readers feel. Prophets have always been outspoken critics from within, challenging an outworn or perverted organization of religion in the name of the basic purpose of religion—the enrichment of human life. Heretics have always arisen *within* the church (otherwise the church branded free-thinking critics as infidels), seeking a more productive formulation of religious basic faith. What Rufus Jones calls “the Church’s debt to heretics” is a reflection of what dissatisfied adherents have accomplished.

Suffice it to say in this chapter that individual religious attitudes are in large measure derived from institutional backgrounds, and not merely from individual original experiences of religion. We are heirs of the past, and from this patrimony

we cannot easily disinherit ourselves. A large area of our problems of religious adjustment appears just at this point: the threat of institutional religion to personal religious growth. By insisting upon uniform modes of expressing religion, the uniqueness of individuals is overlooked and personality often overridden. This attitude was expressed in those earlier evangelical requirements for "getting religion,"

✓ a cataclysmic emotional upheaval called "the sense of sin" and "the working of the Holy Spirit upon the repentant sinner," expected even in little children, as Jonathan Edwards' attempt to arouse in his three-year-old child a "conviction of sin" indicates. This attitude is also characteristic of parents who feel that the child *must* learn to pray "Now I lay me down to sleep" in order to be really religious, and of those who see no religious significance in play or family finance because it is not done in church.

A second threat of institutionalized religion to the individual is its tendency to

✓ identify religious faith with an elaborate program of church activity. Very often the

deeper purposes of religion are lost in a maze of "activities" which are so absorbing on their own account that we forget to ask what they are for and whether in the end they accomplish anything. Just as college curriculum-making may wander far away from education by an elaborate charting of hours and credits and class absences, so a church may stray away into a program so complicated that no one has time to ask how such a program is serving God or man. Under such conditions a church may keep a person so busy that he has not time to find what religion ought to help him find—i.e., a meaning in life.

Furthermore, institutional religion may threaten personal growth by expressing its energies in outworn patterns of action and thought. Its religious education may, from the standpoint of progressive educational psychology, be a menace to the emotional integration of the child. Its Bible stories, taken in slavish adherence to a program of Bible study, may include some of the horrible primitive stories of *Judges*, shocking and immoral. Its pious assertions re-

garding social problems may be made without regard to newer sociological and economic findings. Its explanations of its supreme values may be in doctrinal terms that bespeak a long-dead astronomical assumption that made our earth the hub of the universe, or an exploded physics that separated matter from energy, or an unenlightened physiology that identified starvation with divine indwelling.

Despite these threats, religious institutions are the spring boards of the spiritual life. From them we push off into the future and its religious problems; in them are preserved the powers of the past to thrust us onward; behind them are the adventures of others in ages past who found new power because they took *their* past and molded it to meet their human needs.



CHAPTER THREE

WHAT RELIGION MEANS

IN THE preceding chapter we have spoken rather vaguely of "religious experience," and of the purpose of religion as "the enrichment of human life." Anyone reading current discussions of religion must be impressed with the ease with which people inform us that "religion is life," as though this defined anything! It is easier to describe religion than to define it; but unfortunately the description is too often accepted as a definition. Let the reader be warned that this chapter is not to constitute an addition to the ten thousand odd extant definitions of religion. Something much less pretentious is attempted. It is to be merely a description of two important aspects of what religion means to people. In a word, we shall say that religion makes people dissatisfied and

keeps them steady. Let us try to understand this paradox.

I

The most serious challenge which organized religion meets comes from people who are idealists but find the church useless. There was a time when the church seemed to be *the* custodian of ideals. This was when she was regarded as a special revealer of truth because she was supernatural. Yet even at the height of ecclesiastical prestige there were men who believed that they could find truth without recourse to ritual or priest. These men were the mystics, who believed that by intuitive insight they could grasp the ideal truths. But both priest and mystic were agreed that their knowledge of the ideal came to them by divine revelation. Furthermore, their ideals were stationary goals in a completed world; and these ideals actually existed in another realm of existence which the human mind could know only by special revelation. This was an ancient and honorable idea with the Greek philosopher Plato for its father.

But there is another way of looking at ideals. In this second view ideals are seen in a psychological, rather than a metaphysical, setting. (Perhaps the two will some day be brought together as Professor Whitehead is trying to do.) According to this view, ideals are imaginative projections out of human experience; they are thwarted desires imaginarily fulfilled. The contrast between "actual" and "ideal" is a contrast between the way our needs are only partially met, and the way we can imagine their being fully met. Heaven has been regarded as an ideal place, and the heavens of various peoples show how their desires are projected so that none of life's handicaps are found there and all of life's needs are satisfied to the full. Valhalla allowed the fighting Norseman to battle forever, with no time out for disability. The Happy Hunting-ground furnished to the hopeful Indian an unlimited supply of game and none of the failures of the real hunt. To the poor, heaven was rich in gorgeous jeweled gates, golden streets, and crystal seas; to the weary it was rest eternal; to the socially negligible

it was presence before the smile of God in the heavenly court.

Ideals arise out of the sense of inadequacy, the consciousness of dissatisfaction and incompleteness in life. Ideals are like a series of mountain peaks. When one is reached another we had not seen before looms up beyond. And ideals grow. Successively we plan to enter school, to get into high school, perhaps to be a college graduate, to secure a higher degree, and to attain eminence in research. Each stage projects the next, and so the ideals evolve. For each level the next seems the maximum until it is reached and we look on beyond. The thing that now looks like absolute attainment is tomorrow seen in its relativity; the climax becomes "an interesting stage."

As suggested in the last chapter, imaginative thinking appears when established habits prove inadequate. At this crisis, by thinking we project alternative goals of action. The ideal is the projection of an end that shall give satisfaction. While reasoning defines the end, the projection of the ideal involves emotions.

Thus the ideal is more than an idea; it is a *satisfying* idea of attainment.

> Idealism, then, is born of discontent. We desire that which is more satisfying than the present attainment. The idealist is, therefore, a sensitive person. Routine is destructive precisely because it dulls sensitivity. We do not notice what we are used to. Sensitivity is cultivated by exposing oneself to new types and new areas of experience. Under these exposures we become aware of new ways of doing things that are more satisfactory. The purpose of modern salesmanship is deliberately to make people look at "something better," in order to make them sensitive and receptive to the sale's appeal. A leading automobile sales manager recently said that the aim of manufacturers is "to keep the public dissatisfied."

Discontent follows unfavorable comparison. The materials for comparison with one's actual life are new ways of satisfying old desires, imaginary pictures of fuller satisfaction like utopias, and satisfaction of wishes in a wider area. The function of utopias is to make the ideal

so appealing that men cannot be content till they have found it. Thus men become dissatisfied with what they have, what they are, or what they have done.

> Our first contention is that religion exists to produce discontent. Without discontent there would be no heaven. But there is a real peril just here. The discontented daydreamer who is paralyzed by his dreams is a familiar type. The hope of heaven is a "paralyzing" dream for some people. They sit with folded hands and wait for heaven while a seething world about them suffers. This is what Marxians mean by calling religion "the opiate of the people." But idealism is not mere daydreaming; it is constructive activity under the impetus of a dream. It is architectural emotionalism.

One of the greatest functions of religion has been to produce moral discontent and hence moral idealism. As suggested before, contentment in any area of life can be transformed into discontent by showing the inadequacy of the current satisfactions for a larger area. What is good enough in the family may not be adequate

in the community. This is all that we mean by "getting perspective." We criticize a small bit of activity by putting it into its larger setting. What we condemn as exploitation is simply getting what we want in a smaller area (family, class, nation) without giving attention to its larger setting (community, economic order, the world). Exploitation is lack of perspective.

Now religion proposes the widest conceivable area of satisfaction, that of the entire universe. Nothing is satisfactory for it which is not satisfactory for the whole cosmos. Its vivid, concrete imagery for saying this is, "It is not God's will." In other words, by proposing a cosmic basis of judgment, religion is continually producing discontent with any more limited area of adjustment. By the same token, when it finds a present ideal to be in harmony with the best cosmic adjustment (so far as it can gauge this), then religion gives backing to idealism by making its aims immediate objectives in a larger plan. This is what is meant by "finding the will of God." All morale comes by

this process of relating immediate ends to their widest significant area. A dirty bit
✓ of trench duty takes on dignity as part of a "war for democracy" (though the worn-out soldier would often say, "Democracy? Hell!" because the immediate situation obscured the larger meaning).

Religion, then, projects ideals (1) by refusing to accept this world as satisfactory, (2) by raising the values of human experience to a cosmic level, (3) by inducing discontent with the present world till it is in harmony with the whole cosmos, and (4) by setting up standards of personality in terms of the cosmic harmony, and embodying these standards in its heroes like Buddha, Jeremiah, Confucius, or Jesus. In doing this religion as the ideal-maker runs risks of making no contact with the world of actual experience. Castles in the air need earthly foundations if we are to reach them. Again, there is danger of sti-
✓ fling activity in dreaming—a besetting temptation of the saints. And there is always the risk of the religious man projecting private utopias of his own, unrelated to the wider perspective of the group's

experience. Of such material religious cranks are made. Yet, despite these dangers which beset all social adventure, religion has produced its great prophets, through whose dissatisfaction the world has moved on to better life.

II

If religion makes people dissatisfied, only half its task is done; for the other contribution which religion makes to human life is to steady it. So often has this aspect been stressed that many think religion means stagnation. But there is an important difference between stagnation and stability—the former is static, the latter dynamic. What we mean by stability is steadiness or balance in motion, as anyone knows who has learned to ride a bicycle.

It is the special task of faith to keep us steady. A stock market crash that upsets men's faith in the value of their securities may quickly destroy the equilibrium of a whole nation's business. We all know, too, the disastrous moral breakdown that overtakes some people when their faith in a

mate, a movement, or an ideal is destroyed. There is this much of truth in the fundamentalists' contention that abandonment of the old faith leads to moral collapse. For some people it does; but the collapse is due not so much to the particular ideas abandoned as to the disintegration of an organized attitude.

Now, faith connotes three things. Most commonly in religion it is used to mean an act of belief. To some people it even suggests "believing what ain't so," accepting what is not reasonable. One of the greatest theologians of the Church took "*credo quia absurdum*" ("I believe because it is rationally absurd") as a statement of what is meant by faith. Inevitably, therefore, men have set faith over against reason and intelligence as though a clear contradiction were involved. Such a faith is always playing hide-and-seek with intelligence, looking for a dark cave where the light of reason cannot reach, and when inhabiting it, continually fearful that some one may bring in a light. This is the faith that fights off science as a dangerous enemy. This is the faith that makes others

brand religion as obscurantism. Yet even this kind of faith cherishes a kernel of truth. For we do accept many things that we cannot fully explain: love that outruns expediency in reckless sacrifice, unerring flight of pigeons to their home by some strange sense the scientist has never fathomed yet, or the solidity of "matter" that Einstein now insists is mostly empty space.

What is it, then, that feeds our faith while explanations change? It is some deep conviction based on experience, as vivid as the experience was vivid, as comprehensive as the range of experience it rests upon, as firm as the grip of that experience upon our deepest needs. Thus men believed in Jesus. They saw in him a leadership sufficient for their needs. So comprehensive was his power in their lives that they acclaimed him a genius. Seeking to make his genius explicable to themselves, they turned to current explanations of genius. In the world of the New Testament such a "psychology of genius" was to be found in a "metaphysics of genius." How was the genius of Alex-

ander, the greatest military leader in their lore, to be explained? And what of the administrative genius of Augustus Cæsar, the medical brilliance of Apollonius of Tyana, the philosophic insight of Plato?

The answer was that genius owes its origin to divine paternity; so stories of the virgin birth of all these heroes were extant.

Why should not Christian writers, accepting the explanations of their time, say the same thing of their religious hero?

✓ The formula of explanation rationalizes the faith; it does not generate faith. Tradition is a record of intellectual formulæ used to explain a persistent experience. It is, therefore, a starting-point for thought. As knowledge grows new explanatory laws emerge and formulæ are changed. But the experiential facts remain.

Furthermore, faith connotes an attitude of feeling. To some it is a vague complacency that refuses to be disturbed by brutal facts. An artificial organization of one's life without reference to the items of ordinary folks' experience may give the calm of integrated personality; but such personality is stunted in its growth, and

some day the "goblins'll get it"—the goblins of bitter disappointment, and social change, and new delights. To others, faith is a lazy acquiescence in the *status quo*; doomed just as surely as change is sure. Still others mean by faith an equally lazy resting back upon "evolution" as taking care of things. Thinking that because change is inevitable progress is certain, they calmly believe that perfection is on the way.

To identify such shallow complacency with faith is slander. What then becomes of the rôle of religion as the producer of dissatisfaction? How many cantankerous saints has such a "faith" produced! Paul dealt with this type of "faith" in Thessalonica in no uncertain terms. "He that will not work," said the apostle to the pious idlers, "let him not eat." To meet life's problems fairly is to shatter shallow faith. There is an all-important difference between shallow complacency and profound poise. And it is the latter that we seek. The profundity of a man's feeling of security is in direct proportion to the number of facts he faces. This is perhaps

the basis of the expression, "philosophic calm," though much of even this is the complacency of one removed from life's conflicts. (It has been said that a friend is one who knows all about you and still believes in you. This, indeed, is real faith. Religious faith is found at its best in the man who finds out all he can about his world and still believes in it. This is the deepest calm a man can know.)

Such calm is born of faith in its third aspect. For faith is essentially a mode of action. It has been well described as "what you propose to do in the face of your ignorance." Whether to quit or to seek the meaning of a puzzling event, this is the test a scientist must ever face. Science itself is an act of faith, a tackling of things it cannot understand, confident that somehow they will yield their power. This is what men have done with God. "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me," said Jacob to his divine visitor. This, too, is what men have done with the problem of evil, when they have sought not so much to explain it theoretically as to learn what to do with it. For the problem of

evil is a challenge not so much to speculation as to action.

✓ Such, then, is faith: a basic experience seeking—and often never finding—an adequate doctrine to explain it; a deep-set steadiness anchored in the hardest rocks the sea of life conceals; a resolute acceptance of life itself as a fruitful answer to our moral effort. Dogmatism is faith become effete by resting on its laurels. Agnosticism is faith acknowledging the margin of unsolved problems that surround our little life, but tempted to leave them alone instead of tackling them. Cynicism is that weariness which comes from the stiff climb of faithful effort, a weariness masked as superiority that smiles at braver souls that dare to keep on climbing. Faith is the will to climb, ✓ to traffic with the mysteries of life, to push ahead through failure or success to greater heights beyond, sure that at the peak *some* lovely view will give life richer meaning. Faith is living on the assumption that life has a meaning to be discovered; that the universe we live in is related to our moral effort.

This longer view it is that gives the man of faith his poise amid the petty upheavals of daily experience, that keeps him steady when his explanations turn out to be false, that buoys him up when weariness threatens to submerge his courage, that drives the piles whereon the tower of his strength is built till they go down through muddy waters of uncertainty to a bedrock of life's own great realities.)

Picture the growth of a human personality with all its varied impulses that come from the core of its energy, call it what you will—libido, vital urge, instinctive drive. The task of developing personality is to organize the various trends of behavior into an integrated, directed expression. In this process emotional satisfactions are achieved, or thwarted by repression. The well-integrated person is he in whom conflicting tendencies present in all of us are harmonized in the attempt to realize a unified objective of his life. The resolution of these inner conflicts gives him added energy and explains the energetic quality of the man with a purpose. But if the personality is to

achieve the best adjustment, then the objective in view must include a maximum area of satisfactions of the deep desires; that is, the most effective person socially is the one whose interests are broadest and who can still hold those widely varied interests in a unity. This is why religion, by heightening sensitivity in the individual, broadens the personality. *Breadth* of personality means a great number of contacts spread out over a wide area, across many classes, many cultures, many social enterprises, many kinds of people, many sorts of literature, and so on. But many versatile people are shallow because our limited energies allow us to expend our number of contacts either extensively or intensively. Extensiveness of human contacts without intensity (that is, without establishing many contacts with any one individual) gives us the person with many acquaintances and few deep friendships.

Now, religion, by forcing us below surface contacts with life to more intensive experience, develops the *depth* of personality. This it is which stabilizes us in life's choppy seas; we have lots of keel under

our boat. But depth without breadth is narrowness. How escape the dilemma? The secret lies in conserving energy through organizing the self around some dominant drive of life, some great purpose, so that both breadth and depth are possible. This is precisely the function of the ideal in anyone's life; and religion, by stimulating us to project ideals, serves both to broaden and to deepen our personality. By creating discontent it broadens our sensitivity and hence our experience. Through such discontent it instigates ideal-making. The ideal organizes our emotions and coördinates the facts of our experience and our activity till we find that freedom from conflict, "that peace which the world cannot give" of itself. If the life's ideal is regarded by the individual as in line with the purpose of the cosmos or the will of God, then he will say happily, "In His will is our peace."



CHAPTER FOUR

RELIGIOUS INFANTILISM AND RELIGIOUS MATURITY

MANY people never grow up in their religion. They achieve the status of adults in physiological growth, in social relationships, in scientific understanding; but they fail to reach adulthood in religious attitudes. In religion they are still children. Now, why is this? How does it happen?

We saw in Chapter II how religious attitudes are built up psychologically. They represent the organization of emotions around some object which is regarded as of supreme importance. This "supreme importance" is attributed to it precisely because it is the means of satisfying the widest range of emotional needs. The philosopher will call it "the dominant value"; for values are always related to attitudes, and the "object" in the attitude

constitutes the value. Thus objects have different values in different attitudes. The flag, when we take the economic attitude toward it, is a colored cloth—preferably bunting for wearing qualities—worth a few dollars. The flag, when we take the patriotic attitude toward it, is worth America's integrity and the combined energies of her citizens—worth a nation. The meaning of any object is determined for us by the experiences we have had of it. As these experiences change and grow, so the meaning of the object changes and grows. It would seem, then, that the best way to grasp the full meaning of a tool is to see all the things it will do, to experiment with it in all sorts of ways. In the same way we learn to know more fully the meaning of friendship by our relations with friends in sickness as well as in health, on hikes as well as in the office, in exhilarating joys as well as in depressing sorrows, in serious discussions as well as in play. Of course, many people think of friendship in terms of having a playmate and little more; they are childish in the art of friendship. To many a husband love

is still at the infantile stage where it means protective, soothing care; he wants a wife to mother him, to do for him what a child's mother does for it. Many a home is wrecked because the husband has not grown up emotionally.

Now many people never grow up religiously; they stay at the level of their childhood in religious thought and feeling. They have never cultivated the religious attitude in terms of growing experience. The emotions have never been transferred to objects that are consonant with adult experiences. Just as the child grows up to the new and disturbing knowledge that his father does not know everything, and modifies his filial attitude accordingly, so we grow up to new discoveries in science and in social relations and have to modify our religious attitudes accordingly. Otherwise we remain children in religious attitudes. This inevitably means that in religious infantilism the religious attitude is not related to other attitudes—scientific, ethical, etc. Consequently, the personality of such a person is not fully organized; the religious

attitudes are split off from the rest. This is what is meant by keeping one's religious ideas "in a watertight compartment." It may give rise to sweeping distinctions between "sacred" and "secular" concerns. Not every such separation is due to infantilism, but infantilism may produce such a separation.

Religious infantilism, then, is the organization of the emotions around an object which is not acceptable to adult thinking. There are degrees of adulthood in thinking; but by adult thinking we mean the accumulated knowledge of a normal grown-up. The scope of "accumulated knowledge" will, of course, vary with the training of the individual; the so-called "intellectual" is presumably conversant with a wider area of facts than those not so branded. Consequently, the modification of his childhood attitudes will be greater. In these days many children have truer conceptions of the world of science than have some adults. In such a case the youngster may have a more acceptable religious object than the adult in question. Similarly, the heresies of adoles-

cence are often adjustments of religious attitudes to newer scientific and social ideas more advanced than those learned by the grown-ups when the latter were in school or college.

Reactions of people to the bearing of new knowledge on their religion vary. Where religious attitudes are dissociated from the rest of experience, inner conflict is almost bound to result. Viewed psychologically, this is a case of repression, and the results usually observed in such people's behavior are typical reactions of emotional repression. The man may show violent intolerance of those whose religion embodies the ideas he has repressed. The apostle Paul was, as persecutor, trying to stamp out the heresy of Jesus' followers because they were trying to make Judaism cosmopolitan. But this cosmopolitanism was the great unassimilated factor in his own Jewish faith as a Pharisee's son, born a Roman citizen and raised in a center of Greek culture. Very often a conservative ✓ will try to secure the dismissal of a preacher or a teacher who gives forth the

views he is himself fighting to resist in himself.

Or there may arise from such a person a loud demand for "conviction" in the heretic, to compensate for his own suppressed uncertainty. Perhaps he will over-compensate, himself, by vehement assertion of his own belief. With his usual insight, Shakespeare suspected one of his characters because "he doth protest *too* much." This vigorous protestation conceals uncertainty oftentimes not only in the "fundamentalist," but in the self-styled "scientifically minded modernist" as well. Some atheists wax so vigorous in denying the existence of any god that we are led to suspect them of being afraid that there is one. Finally, in extreme cases, the inner conflict between the religious and other phases of a personality may actually lead to psychoneuroses such as hysteria or neurasthenia or obsessions. Some of those thus affected soon are taken to hospitals for the insane.

• The danger of having religious attitudes not in harmony with adult knowledge is thus a real psychological risk. It is not,

as we have said above, that loyalty to a parent's faith is *ipso facto* wrong, but that a faith accepted in childhood must be adjusted constantly so as to keep it integrated with other phases of one's experience. Only in this way can inner conflict be avoided with its loss of energy, its repressive influence, and its mental risks. (At this point it is necessary to explain that one's religious experience need not be completely *subordinated* to another area of experience like one's scientific knowledge; but the two must be mutually related. If the scientific knowledge has any special claim it is because it represents a widely spread, carefully organized body of experience shared by people who have taken special pains to avoid prejudice; and consequently furnishes a more extensive basis of experience for judgment.)

How can infantilism in religion be escaped? By organizing the emotional life around an object which is acceptable in the light of our widest area of experience. To cling to the absolute authority of a Bible which further study shows to have been written with relation to specific sit-

uations, with some of its moral injunctions clearly the product of an outgrown stage in culture (*e.g.*, the tribal ethics of many parts of *Judges*), is to attempt to have a religion which one's thoughtful and up-to-date self cannot accept. To trust the sort of God who is in flat contradiction to what we know of the world about us is to court what psychiatrists call a split personality; it is to break down the integrity of the self. To escape infantilism we must hold together the varied selves that make up each one of us and assimilate new growth in one self to all the other selves.

This means two things: First, we must redefine the highest meanings or values of life continually in terms of enlarging experience. Whatever he may be in and of himself, the God-of-experience is certainly a growing God, the idea of God is a developing idea. Only by redefining the meaning of life can we keep abreast of life itself. To take the religious values of a child and expect them to cover adult experience is unreasonable. To this program of a growing theology liberalism is thoroughly committed.

But there is another requirement which liberalism has failed pitifully to meet. It can best be stated by showing how attitudes may disintegrate by disconnecting the object from the emotions built up around it. The following diagram will help the explanation:

Attitude

Sentimentalism.. $\underbrace{(\text{Emotions} \rightarrow \text{Object})}$.. Dry intellectualism.

If emotions are aroused, but with no definite object in view, with no intellectual definition, we have what is often spoken of as slopping sentimentalism—a group feels that “it is so wonderful to be here,” but doesn’t know why. At the other extreme, it is possible to become so preoccupied with defining the object that the emotions are left out of the reckoning. This is “dry-as-dust intellectualism,” from which liberal religion has suffered sadly. So preoccupied have “modernists” become with accurate definition of doctrines, that they have lost sight too often of the deep emotional ties which bound men to the old dogmas. The task of escaping from religious infantilism includes, therefore, the transfer of

emotions from the old ideas to the new. Unless this is done, the vital energies of religion remain fixated upon the earlier objects of faith, because the emotions have remained there for lack of transfer. Accordingly, the weary modernist may in a crisis fall back into his childish religious attitudes, for the very excellent reason that his scientifically respectable ideas leave him soul-hungry, they do not satisfy his emotional demands. The churches to-day need a more effective method for re-conditioning religious attitudes in the direction of liberal ideas. The secret of the effectiveness of Dr. Harry Emerson Fosdick's preaching lies in his ability to transfer men's emotions from old religious ideas to new.

First we must find out what sorts of emotional satisfactions the old ideas stood for. Following a convenient classification of the desires offered by W. I. Thomas in his *The Polish Peasant in Europe and America*, let us assume that men desire (1) security, (2) new experience, novelty, a change, adventure, (3) social recognition, or standing in the group, and (4)

intimate response, the feeling of being understood. Now, the same doctrine may stand for different basic satisfactions to different people. To one man the divinity of Christ means the assurance of salvation for eternity through his atoning sacrifice; to another it means the hope of a new earth when Christ will come in divine glory; to a third it means that the Christian believer has a superior standing over the heathen in God's eyes; while a fourth sees in Christ's divinity the only possible basis for his continuing presence in the mystic intimacy of communion. Picture a preacher seeking to reinterpret this doctrine in more intelligible terminology. How hopeless his ministry if, to a man yearning for safety above a fleeting world, he offers the adventurous challenge of a fearless Man of Galilee dying for new ideas! And yet how often this is done with all the best intent. To scoff at a safe-and-sane attitude and take unholy joy in giving the fearful brother a good cold bath in new ideas, is as poor psychology as to try to train out timidity by bullying a child; all it succeeds in doing is to make

the old dogma dearer than ever. No; the rescue from old attachments of childhood or unenlightened days can be fully accomplished only when the deep emotional values of the old are sympathetically understood.

Then, and only then, can a helpful interpretation of the more tenable idea be offered. We need emotional equivalents for outworn doctrines, and these cannot be furnished till we know first the emotions associated with these older views. The divine Christ of a traditional drama of salvation, may become a wholly human Jesus, but he must still be able to save men to a better life. The Christ of the Kingdom may not be expected in a second coming, but he must be able to introduce men to a new ideal of human social life. Though a Christian lose his naïve superciliousness toward the great unwashed, still some guaranty of a better status gained by following Jesus loyally will still be in demand. And he who finds the ever-living Christ too incredible to ground a mystic intimacy upon, must form some close-knit bond of fellowship with Jesus

in common striving in order to gain the feeling of intimate response to his own self-revealing.

To take a faith caught at a mother's lips and then ignore all contradiction is to suppress the conflict till it manifests itself in intolerance, fanaticism, bullying, or dark despair. To know what it stands for as a meaning found in life, then to compare this meaning with what we learn from growing life and science and art and richer human contacts, this gives us solid ground on which to build our attitudes of faith. If with the various intellectual definitions that we make we bring abreast the longings that we have for safety or new experience, some standing in our world, some deeper understanding from a friend, then we shall keep our poise, come what may; in restless questing after a better life we shall be able to keep a level keel because our emotions are well organized, our energies well balanced.



CHAPTER FIVE

THE SKEPTIC'S SEARCH FOR THE MEANING OF GOD

No ISSUE is quite so acute in current religious thought as this. To some, belief in God is a sign of infantilism; to others it is the only explanation of our world upon which adequate adjustment can be made. We are dealing, therefore, not merely with a hypothesis, but with an attitude. To realize this is to seek a different line of solution, not so much in terms of some philosophic discussion of the nature of God, but rather by discovering what emotional experiences lie behind the conviction. When Professor Hocking of Harvard (then at Yale) wrote his book on *The Meaning of God in Human Experience*, he gave us a new way of finding the meaning of the conception.

In the light of our preceding discussions we are now ready to understand that

God implies not alone some metaphysical concept, but stands for definite emotional experiences which have been built up around it in the attitude of God-belief. The belief has begotten its own experiences, the emotional attitudes of which attach to one's idea of God. Similarly our contacts with other people's faith in God give God meaning in our own thinking—a grandmother's wonderful courage because of implicit belief in Providence; a friend's unremitting loyalty to truth because of his assurance that God is vindicating truth; the moral energy of a social prophet seeking God's Kingdom for his fellow men. These are more often the reasons why men believe or disbelieve in God, than reasons they may find in books. Let us ask, then, why men have believed in God, and why these reasons have been called into question.

I

Many Christians believe in God because it was the conviction which furnished the driving force of Jesus' life. All that Jesus did and suffered he carried on because he

believed himself to be doing his Father's will. There is no denying this; it is too integral a part not only of his sayings but of the unspoken assumptions to which he tacitly refers time and again. Therefore, it is pointed out, it is folly to expect men to emulate Jesus' courage and poise and devotion to his fellow men unless they can share, too, the assurance which made his heroism possible. Jesus without his theistic certitude would not be the Jesus whom we admire and seek to follow.

But the honest doubter asks at this point whether, after all, Jesus was not a man of his day, saturated, like his contemporaries, with supernaturalism; and whether this assumption still stands today. Cannot a man live that kind of a life without, perforce, that especial world-view? In support of his doubt the doubter will note that we no longer find it necessary to accept Jesus' theory of disease, his astronomy, or his belief in the Davidic authorship of the Psalms in order to be true followers of his. Or the statement may be turned into a challenge that if we insist on one of Jesus' beliefs as essential

to his kind of life, we are committed to accept all his ideas in order to be true followers, and should therefore have to join some of those Christian sects which seek to reproduce the details of his life.

A second reason why men believe in God is that the sense of security rests for most religious people upon this belief. God is their anchorage in eternity; their guaranty of safety in a changing world; their one assurance in the midst of uncertain life where death lies ever around the corner to lead us blindfold into the unknown; their stable rock in the quicksand of changing knowledge, changing morals, and flagging energies. Because of this they cling to him, frightened when men would tell them he is not there, agonized by any doubts, believing where they cannot understand.

But, queries some one seeking to be frank with himself, is their sense of security perchance a false one? Is it not "a great illusion" born of mistaken hope, like some mirage where thirst-crazed travelers think they see oases that are not? Why trust in what is only some fond hope? Can

hopes, however earnest, change a hard, cold world into the image of our wishful thought? Why base security on that of which our minds are so uncertain? These are the queries that break down men's confidence; and when confidence is gone what security is left?

Still others, bent upon the quest of a better life, say that for them the pursuit of ideals demands some guaranty of their significance. To sacrifice for some ideal end, yet doubtful if the candle's worth the game, is to be fools. If God be not there, conservator of the ends for which we struggle bravely on, how shall we keep our courage, our morale? Granting that hopes that have no ground for confidence are absurd, does this not mean futility for all idealistic striving unless the great values are set in the universe, solid and sure? The Kingdom of God without a God! Is this not nonsense, a tragic delusion?

But, asks the seeker after truth, is an idea of God the *only* guaranty of values yet unrealized, of ideals that beckon us to deeds of honor? Have not men lived and died for causes without insisting on a God

to give those causes footing in the world? Need there be *cosmic* sanction for the values that we strive for through difficulties and in weariness? Why not a feeling that the dreams we make, the ideals we project, are valid possibilities because of what we know of nature and its laws? Why drag God into it? Why even posit some great cosmic purpose? Do we not make our purposes and achieve them without asking for some eternal Guarantor to sign our mortgage on the future?

Or again, to many, God is the only adequate explanation of how things came into being. Origins of mind, of life, of matter lie hidden in mystery, some say, and only the idea of a Creator can unlock the secret. Even if particular stories of creation prove naïve, supposing, as they do, that all creation is by manufacture rather than by growth, yet growth is but a word and does not explain the source. And so they find their God hidden in the gray dawn of the world's brief day, or see him working quietly in those strange physical processes whereby the atoms formed and in colloidal form began to live; or even consider Him

as some cosmic mathematical unity from which the various patterns of the cosmos drew their meaning. Here they can find an impregnable citadel for God, because a guess is all that men can fling against it. How else can anyone explain the subtle unity, the wonderful adjustment of the scheme to foster life and mind, the intricacy of the movements of the universe as a whole with all its parts?

And yet the questioner waits to put his queries. Did not the Deists stress a God of origins and lose him at the threshold of the world—a world he set in motion according to its laws (Newtonian laws the Deists thought) and let it go, never again to interfere? They saved the God of origins by putting him in his place like some great forebear, significant as the founder of our line, but otherwise ignored. Inevitably a God pushed so far back fell out of men's religious sight. Why worry about the God of the Creation? His work is done. Granted that we do not know who began all this, does it make much difference, now that it has changed so much?

Many are homeless in a universe with-

out God. They want the sense of comradeship in the vast spaces of the world. To be a little race, whirling on one small planet far from the center of the cosmic stage, what loneliness can exceed this? Only if there is some kind Friend-behind-phenomena to count upon can they find life bearable. Some comradeship they must have to preserve their sanity before the overpowering intricacy of the world, or else with cynical despair they must resign themselves to what they cannot grasp, far less control.

Sadly, but with unfailing honesty, the seeker shakes his head. How can there be a comradeship when there is none to talk to? How could we find a comrade off among the suns? And if some process be offered, does a man commune with processes? "No," says he, "no comradeship has any sense to it except the kind that grows on mutual conversation, such as one human finds with another. If by companionship with the Divine you mean adjustment to natural laws, what is there of comradeship in that? Why call it comradeship any more than cranking a car is

being the motor's comrade, or sailing by the wind a form of keeping a tryst with the elements. It is good poetry; but do not take it for a literal truth to lean upon."

What is a cosmic comrade?

Finally, there are those who can defy all arguments against their firm belief in God: they have experienced His reality for themselves, and nothing can shake their sureness. "What is more real," they say, "than God's voice (whether in sound I care not) speaking to me to comfort untold misery, and I in a flash all joy again?" What can one say when some one tells of a life of depravity changed by God's love to something beautiful, when the observer can vouch for the change? How shall we deny to the mystic the claim that God did woo him with a peace that nothing else could give? He laughs at doubt and knows better than all the skeptics summoned to cross-examine him.

But does he? "Real?" Who knows what is real that he feels? Could anything feel more real than a dream? How can we claim reality for our experience unless we verify it with others and remove all other possi-

ble accounts of why we felt it? So run the questions, and they become acute when it is shown how, from some hidden complex, tapped by a chance word or scene or event, there can well up a flood of peace or fury or some firm resolve. Too many records clog the files of psychotherapists to be denied; the *feeling* of reality is too subjective to be used as evidence for God.

II

Whence come all these difficulties that the critical person discerns? Mainly they are a product of the outlook of modern science and its companion movements in philosophy. It is our next task, then, to see how scientific thinking has raised such questions, and against this background we shall be able, perhaps, the better to see where our honest critic may find a basis for religious belief.

In the first place, our thinking is dominated (some might say, too much) by the idea of change and development. This attitude has been reinforced, curiously enough, by biblical study itself. Studying the biblical writings in their chronological

order, scholars have come upon a realization that the Scriptures portray a changing religion, as a later chapter will show. The God of Moses' thought was a mountain god, Yahweh of Sinai, brought in the Ark of the Covenant to Palestine, there to become a god of the plains and of crops as well as of mountain sheep and cattle. Later men saw him as a god of nations, ruler of the world above all gods, and then as sole God of the universe. Once thought to be a sponsor of the brutal mores of tribal warfare, he became the sublime, righteous God of Isaiah. If God has changed in the beliefs of men so often, may the notion not change again? Since Darwin's day the Western world has looked for change with confidence. The law of life in a changing world is changing adaptation. Evolution depends upon flexible adjustment. "Fear not change; fear, rather, the changeless, for it is inflexible and therefore doomed"; so runs the admonition. Perhaps the pioneers of this new continent have stamped their attitudes into our intellectual fabric, till in their spirit of adventure we hail the new

as always a promise of better things. Certain it is that, in these varied lines of thought, men have accepted change as a hopeful sign. The old is under suspicion till it proves its right to survive. What a reversal from the days when antiquity was an asset! Now men ask of God, can the old God be adequate for the new age? Do not new tasks demand new notions of our world, and should a god-belief survive which served for men's needs in that strange antiquated world of prescientific days? Like the little boy from Rochester, New York, who could not understand how there could be pictures of Christ before Mr. Eastman's day, so many people cannot see how men could teach a god for modern needs in ages of the past.

A second cause of disbelief in God is the changed view of our universe. When the earth ceased to be central, man ceased to be central in the cosmos. If the uniqueness of man's creation still remained, the new biology destroyed this and made of man an animal, with man's status as a specially created favorite of God destroyed, it was difficult to see why God

should give his Son to save man if man were only an incidental product of the stream of life. Quickly the ship of faith, cut from its moorings, drifted upon the reefs of a new land—the domain of modern scientific explanation with its reliance upon cause and effect. The search for causal sequences in all forms of behavior, whether of rocks and seas or beasts and men, led men into new lines of thought. This is well described in Professor G. B. Smith's story of riding on the train with a young fellow across the Great Desert, when he was startled to hear the man say, "I wonder why God made so large a desert here?" for Dr. Smith himself had been ransacking his memory for the geological processes that would explain such an aspect of the earth's crust. With the increase in naturalistic explanations men seem to resort less and less to divine agency. God is forgotten when we try to understand the world we live in. Where find a place for God, either astronomically or logically? This question our changed outlook has produced.

And then, a third source of difficulties

to the theistic believer is the newer emphasis in philosophy. With the rise of psychology has come a keener interest in that phase of philosophy which asks how we know. Philosophy consists in answering three questions: What sort of a world do we live in? (Metaphysics.) How can we know what sort of a world we live in? (Epistemology and Logic.) What difference does it make for practical living? (Ethics.) Now, the renewed interest in epistemology, or theory of knowledge, has led men to scrutinize the claims of revelation in religion. How does anyone *know* that God exists? Along with this trend in philosophic thought, the revolt against authoritarianism had led men to insist on the rights of individual experiences. In fact, stress has been laid upon experiences as the starting-point for knowledge. With the statement that only by a comparison of our several experiences can we determine what is true and what not. Thus it comes about that the pronouncement of the Church, once the source of certain knowledge about God, is no longer accepted as final, but only as an opinion to be tested

by experience. The authority of the New Testament, and even of Jesus himself, is subjected to the same test. Compared with other ideas about our world, furnished by science, the idea of God is so hard to verify. Accordingly, on many sides the question is raised: "Is so precarious an assertion as that of God's existence to be taken seriously?" Pragmatism follows with the question as to whether belief in God is necessary for human welfare.

Most subtle of all disquieting questions is that which comes from the psychology of religion itself. For this new study has directed its scrutiny upon the process of believing. Assuming that knowing is a form of organic adaptation to the environment, psychology begins to study the very nature of belief. Belief, it finds, is a reliance upon certain ideas which have secured satisfactory adjustment before for the believer. But belief connotes a feeling of the future value of the idea as well. Thus there comes into the discussion a distinction between belief and over-belief; the former is reliance on an idea which has been found to be a sound assumption

in others' experience (as that you will sink in mud, or that you will probably destroy a friendship with insults); while over-belief is reliance upon an idea for the future that has not been fully vindicated in others' experience (the mother's confidence in a hypocritical son, or the speculator's assurance that a given stock will keep on rising to far beyond normal values). Religion is especially involved in this problem of belief in the unverifiable. (Religionists frequently resent the assumption of science that anything is unverified which has not been tested under scientific control. But this is for the moment beyond our discussion.) Such belief in the unverifiable is the occasion of a psychological conflict which the individual has between an inherited faith and a scientific training. Often the conflict is suspended by a truce whereby faith shall be left outside the scope of inquiry. The risks of this procedure we have seen in the preceding chapter. For often it is shown that ardent belief in the unverifiable is an emotional fixation. However, some may resolve the conflict through closer analysis

of the believing process. It may be found that a particular doctrine to which the believer sticks in ardent loyalty is really the symbol of certain values that he seeks. What then occurs is a very crucial question—Cannot the values of the God-idea be discovered in a way consistent with modern scientific method?

But what is the scientific method? Many people, won over by the magnificent technological triumphs of modern science but woefully ignorant of the scientific method, have made of scientific proof a fetish. This has proved very embarrassing to scientists themselves, who are our humblest seekers after truth, changing their own methods to suit the different sorts of data with which they deal.

When we watch the scientist actually at work in his workshop what do we learn as to his methods of proof? First of all he selects the type of data he is going to observe; if he is watching for a yellow flame to burst forth when the sodium is dropped into a crucible of water, he is not concerned about whether the door is open or shut, the window shades up or down.

He excludes what he considers "negligible factors." (It is interesting to note that scientific progress is often advanced by considering the bearing upon the experiment of supposed "negligible factors"!) There is in all exact scientific work a delimitation of the field of inquiry; the researcher must specialize in some particular area of observation. Furthermore, the assurance shown by the scientist that he has proved a hypothesis varies directly with the narrowness of his experiment; the narrower the scope the surer he is. Scientific proof is therefore relative to the especial conditions observed. No cautious scientist will venture beyond this; that would be "overhasty generalization." No scientific proofs are absolute, as some folk seem to think.

Again, what does the scientific experimenter mean by "data"? People so often talk of "bare facts" as if there were no room for doubt as to them. Unfortunately, facts always appear clothed—clothed in some particular meaning according to the situation in which they are observed. An automobile as a datum may mean 2,600

pounds of weight, or it may mean 32 horsepower of pulling strength, or it may mean a sign of economic superiority to the Joneses. Which is the real fact? Now, this is a difficult question to answer, since we feel that all of these meanings are facts. ✓ In other words, any datum represents a particular angle of observation and description.

Precisely because the data vary with the slant of the observer, we verify them by a lot of different observations from different angles to be sure we have the "facts." Those points on which we all agree are accepted as facts. If this be so, then it is important that we keep as comprehensive an attitude as possible, since some new angle may alter the case and furnish the basis for a truer (that is a more comprehensive) statement of fact. This is what scientists mean by keeping an open mind. Experimentation is the road to fuller meaning, to truer estimates of fact. This feeling that every situation has elements which only further study can reveal is the basis of continual research in science.

But practical living always asserts a certain impatience with the everlasting caution of science. What we call "applied," as distinguished from "pure," science is the urge to *do* something with what we already know. Sometimes applied science courts catastrophe by being too hasty to take laboratory findings into practice before the laboratory experiment is finished. (Efficiency rests on forethought.) But because we have to live ahead of our full analyses of our experience, action is forever going ahead of full proof. When knowledge reaches its limits, action furnishes the test. This is what experimental method means. All experimentation is faith; *i.e.*, it uses hypotheses in new conditions.

III

A search for the values connoted by belief in God may learn much from this attitude of science. Such search must begin with experiences we can accept as genuine, and then study them in all their bearings. Granted that we look for data that will test the hypothesis, what sort of data are

involved in the idea of God? The suggestion here made is that the meaning of the idea of God has always been found in the values of life. Values furnish a clue to God-ideas, and we do actually experience values—i.e., things that are worth something. Let us, then, start with these.

God has always embodied the highest values of the group for thoughtful worshipers. Anything less than this He could not be; His worshipers would outgrow him, as many religions in history have outgrown their old gods. The "will of God" has always kept pace with men's highest thought.

But men have never, other than certain modern, psychologically sophisticated people, identified their God with their own highest ideals. He has always been more objective than that. The values he embodied have been regarded as characteristics of an objective reality; the world has been viewed as embodying these values apart from human creation. Belief in God meant that the universe itself is worth while, that men can find vindication of their own ideals in the kind of objective

world they have about them. But always God stood for objective values.

Ideas of God have changed and grown as objects have grown in value. In the history of religions God has always been regarded as sponsoring new objects that have been deemed valuable—the crops of Canaan for a nomadic folk, international treaties between warring peoples, laws promulgated for a society by some ancient Moses or Hammurabi. As growing knowledge made the world more complex, the meaning of God expanded correspondingly. God dare not be inadequate for the worshipers' widest needs.

The types of values which men sought explain the functions of the gods—gods of marriage, birth and death; gods of the home, the field, the city gate; gods of commerce and of war, of learning and of loving; gods of food and shelter; gods of health and honor. The simpler stage kept all these gods, each in his place. But when men saw in unity the key to greater achievement, they organized the gods into a household on Olympus, till final unity led to displacement of the pantheon by

one sole God, Father of all, Ruler of all, Provider for all needs, Guarantor of all values. Monotheism is a recognition of the unity of life.

When present values are projected into a future where all are realized in fullest harmony, this is the utopia of religious thought: the Kingdom of God, the Realm of Light wherein Ahura Mazda reigns, the Western Paradise in which the Buddha calls all men unto him. God's kingdom here on earth is all the values that we know consummated in a great ideal.

The idea of God, then, has stood for the highest values of human experience, ever growing, ever created anew, always seeking unity, an integral part of the universe and yet beyond our present grasp.

If it be too difficult to believe in the God of traditional theologies, let us approach our experience from the angle just suggested. We shall then begin by asking, "What do I consider of supreme worth in my experience?" Let us not try to find some very highbrow definition of our dominant value; let us rather state simply and honestly what in our best moments we

care most about. Is it our children, our wives, our professions? So be it. In order to make this concrete, without too much mental undressing in public, let us suppose that the honors go to our teaching profession, mindful that all good parents are teachers. Teaching, then, is the most worth-while thing in our experience.

Next, we must ask, "What is there in it that makes it worth while?" Let us answer, "Understanding helpfulness." We have now stated the general value that is implied in the particular choice we have made. Teaching is of supreme significance because it seeks to create in students a richer experience through the especial method of being understanding and helpful in the exchange and guidance of experience.

Our next question raised is, "Is this value found in the universe as a whole?" To many this will seem an irrelevant speculation. Yet there are times when the intimacy which a relationship of mutual understanding between teacher and students begets will be slandered; when the effort to understand the difficulties of a

slow student exhausts one's patience; when one is overcome by the sheer fatigue of trying to make strange ideas intelligible and new habits of thinking easy; and at such times one must feel that there is something about the ways of the scheme of things that makes this better than dogmatic bullying. Why is the democratic method of teaching better than the autocratic? Is it a passing fad, or has it some foundation in the nature of our world? Turning to evolution as the explanation of the structure of the universe, we may find the clue in adaptation. Adaptation is most successful when the organism reckons with the greatest number of items in its environment. But this is what we mean by understanding—taking the utmost number of facts into account. Human understanding is based on more delicate sensitivity, which is therefore susceptible to a wider range of factors. Thus growth in adjustment comes with growth in understanding. In addition to this assurance from biological evolution, there is the testimony of the evolution of human society, a story of growth in human mutual

understanding. Against this background the teacher may well feel his task worth while because his quest for deeper understanding is in line with the nature of growth in the world as a whole. But at this stage in our reflection we must beware of mere "wishful thinking" as indicated on page 61f.

A fourth question then emerges, "What sort of human society would allow the fullest realization of this value?" Here is our utopian dream, the ideal that is to give us both discontent and purpose. In response the teacher will say that education makes a great contribution, as growth in understanding, to this ideal. If mutual understanding is to be perfect there must be social sympathy. But this in turn demands that people be allowed freedom of social movement, unrestricted by artificial barriers of class or race or creed. In such a society there must be freedom of inquiry if we are fully to understand. In some such way the picture of our heaven-on-earth will grow, a dream lovely to think upon and able by its beauty to inspire us when our courage flags; a dream, withal,

that has a permanence about it reared on the solid bases in nature itself.

Finally, the unavoidable question comes that makes an ethical challenge to one-self, "What would such an ideal program demand of my personal conduct?" Certain demands stand out at once. To foster mutual understanding one must first of all be dependable himself, truthful and with integrity, so that others may feel confident that we abide by what we say we are. It demands the profoundest possible sympathy, and we can be satisfied with nothing less. Accordingly, we must deliberately train ourselves in the discipline of seeking full understanding; no snap judgments based on immediate reports, no prejudice, but untold patience and persistent search. And then we must be free from the dogmatic spirit that closes understanding with a past decision as settling the issue once for all.

These five questions each one must ask in his own way. Indeed, the teacher might start from some other point to frame his philosophy of life. The greater number of such worth-while things in life that we

analyze until we see their implications, the more comprehensive will be our philosophy of life. The more these implications are seen to interweave so that education and parental love and business honesty combine, the better integrated will be the philosophy of life.

IV

And now comes the inevitable question, What has all this to do with one's religion? Well, one's religion is one's philosophy of life emotionalized. In Chapter IV we saw two risks that always attend the religious attitude—the risk, on the one hand, of unemotional intellectualism that has no drive; the risk, on the other hand, of emotional drive with no intelligent direction. Similarly, for some people a philosophy is merely a process of defining the objects of one's loyalty in a sort of detached rationalism; for others "religion" is consecration to a person, object, or cause which they refuse to define, so that they lapse into obscurantist emotionalism. The development of one's religion must avoid both these extremes in a combination of

intelligence with vital concern for the issues of life.

How can we find emotional satisfaction in our philosophy of life? As we experiment with our convictions we get the thrill of adventure. There are three ways to adventure, and people follow all of them in religion. There is the man who reads of the African jungle in a book. The excitement of the chase is keen, but when the hunter gets into too tight a pinch, the reader can lay down the book and grasp the overstuffed arms of his own chair with reassurance. Many people get all their religious adventure by reading the exploits of the heroes of the faith, only to find relief in the security of modern ease in sheltered life.

Then there is the "adventurer" who goes for big game equipped with an elaborate *ménage* of guides and cooks, assured that at the end the expedition will come out upon the proper day at a safe point beyond the jungle's edge. Like him are those self-styled adventurers in religious faith, who "risk" their doctrines in some prearranged examination, sure that at the

end of the discussion orthodoxy will come out unscathed.

But there are real adventurers too—men who explore in jungles where no trail has been beaten and where odds are real odds in contests of strength, sagacity, and endurance with beasts of prey. Here is the genuine explorer, taking an honest chance with life. Religion has this sort of adventure in it, too, and it is seen where men explore new regions with the equipment that tradition gives them, ready to risk the faith on honest terms with the unknown. No final faith is possible for them, just as no map is final for explorers. They take their doctrines into the jungle of our modern world—wild beasts of prejudice and persecution, deep bogs of weariness and despair, entangled undergrowth of confused conflicting currents of modern thought. This is religion with a thrill to it.

Have you ever noticed the affection an explorer develops for his mascot or his ship, his gun, or his fishing tackle? This is because the meaning of these things will grow as they are valuable parts of the adventure. So the convictions that outlast

the adventure of faith become the dearer for the emotions that the struggle has built up around them. When tools become useless, the explorer leaves them behind, with disappointment proportionate to their usefulness. So, in religion, doctrines are left behind in the great struggle they could not endure; often with sorrow, if they served their day, and new devices, born of necessity not known before, come forth as products of experience in the venture. Likewise men fashion new doctrines able to help them find their way through risks of life to freedom. These are the doctrines they profoundly care about.

✓ Only when a philosophy of life is really adventured with, risked in the *mêlée* of our workaday world and in strange territory that our forebears never knew—only then does it take on emotional power.

The "one consuming passion" which gives men power is, psychologically speaking, that integrity (or integration) that comes from a life unified by a great conviction. Conviction is born when an opinion triumphs in real conflict. This is the way that one's idea of the most important

thing in life achieves the status of a driving power. This is a man's religion. If he be a theist, this is God to him, the fullest value in the widest range of his experience; the richest meaning of the universe itself. Strangely enough this meaning, when it becomes the center of a man's life, can give him "drive," can give his life integrity, can thrust him forth with confidence to meet new issues. This is his experience of the power of God.

It does not matter greatly what name men give to it. If "God" connotes some earlier formula that fails to interpret life for us, perhaps it is as well to drop the term. Only let those who do so bear in mind that what they seek is what men have called "God," a term that men have charged with new content time and time again.

To believe that what experience shows to be most precious must be a part of the scheme of things, and cannot thrive unless it is; to build on values that wide and varied experience validates; to seek to learn their implications for a social ideal and for human character—these are the

essence of belief in God. But to *know* God is to adventure in untried places with such thoughts as these, "betting your life" to find out if they are true. And only life itself, and all of it, can give the answer. But the faith can grow while life goes on, because we have assumed it to be true. Emotion emerges in situations of conflict. Obviously, then, the way to get emotional power for the ideas that we hold is to take them into conflict, to adventure with them. The greater the crises that we meet with them, the deeper the emotional hold they fasten upon us. The oftener we risk them in one uncertain realm and then another, the more our emotions get tied up in them. This is why minorities are so enthusiastic: they take risks with their ideas, because of opposition and ostracism and persecution. He who seeks to keep the emotional thrill of living must risk his life. He who would keep his convictions rich with power must risk them in all sorts of ways. The beliefs that survive will show the vigor of the struggle and will give the sense of security in proportion to the range

of experience they have reckoned with. Furthermore, no one can do this risking for us. It is an individual matter, and each one's faith must be his own achievement—his very own.



CHAPTER SIX

PRAYER AS A MEANS OF RELIGIOUS ADJUSTMENT

WHAT use can the intellectual make of prayer as an instrument of religious adjustment? All too conscious of the way in which some people treat prayer as a sort of theological "let George do it," a thoughtful man is led to wonder if it is even a desirable practice. Then the difficulties which science raises regarding some of the alleged answers to prayer seem to him insuperable. Consequently, he abandons the practice. But the feeling that it has actually proved helpful to many people leads him to resort to it as a last chance when he is in a crisis. Later he may upbraid himself for a fool, or he may decide that it helped him.

I

Before we discuss whether prayer is of any use, let us ask a simple but very

important question, What is praying? Most discussions among the scientifically minded seem to assume that it means simply asking God for something. This is only one of six types of prayer; but let us take it first.

Prayer of *petition* is a call for help beyond one's own present capacity. A governor issues an edict during a drought, calling on the citizens to pray for rain. George Muller runs an English school without any solicitation of funds, sure that each day's prayer will bring its answer in the necessary contributions—and the school is adequately supported. A church calls a special prayer-meeting for one of its members who is at the crisis of an illness, and simultaneously the patient begins to improve.

Prayer is used, again, to refer to *communion* with God, meaning by this a process in which one secures divine guidance on life's problems, a sense of intimacy with the cosmos, a renewal of power through being allied with the will of God, or shelter from the storm and stress of life. Some have used it even to secure di-

vine attention, to remind the Lord, as it were, that they are still around.

A third kind of prayer is the prayer of *confession*, in which acknowledgment is made of sins of omission or sins of commission: "We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done." Men see themselves, in confessional prayer, through the eyes of the Eternal.

There is also prayer of *thanksgiving* when men review their blessings and utter expressions of gratitude for evils escaped and good things they have received. To the Author of the events of life grateful acknowledgment is made when things have gone well.

Then there is *meditation* when the pray-er sees the day's life or the year's career as a whole, and recalls to mind the ideals to which he is committed. By this recall he may also evaluate critically the experiences he meditates upon. For many who cannot assume the existence of a God this daily quiet moment has been possible and helpful. Such quiet has been for many

an approach to God as in the mystic experience.

Finally there is the prayer of *consecration*. Here the aspirations of the worshiper lead into dedication. Over against the ideals are set, not the failures but the powers of the individual, and then these powers are committed to the task of achieving the ideal. The challenge of uncompleted or new tasks is here accepted. Consecration is picking up the gauge thrown by an individual sin or a social wrong, a declaration of intent to fight for one's ideals.

Our problem now is, how can we be true to our fullest knowledge of our world and still find the values of prayer? We can best attack this problem by taking up each of the types of prayer in turn, asking what it has really meant to those who used it, and whether we can still find its values without the difficulties which their formulation of it presents to us.

For if we are to take our science seriously, several definite limitations are set down within which we must work. The first of these is the assumption that no

interruption of natural sequences in the objective world can be accomplished by prayer. Now, this statement must be taken cautiously, for what we call "natural sequences" are really those that we have observed so far. Some "miracles" turn out, on further investigation and the growth of our understanding, to be naturally possible. Still, there are consequences attributed to prayer which we can explain by naturalistic accounts of cause and effect: rain is explainable by meteorology so fully that we can forecast weather with surprising accuracy.

Further, we cannot reasonably claim that there exists in the stellar spaces some physical individual to talk with us as man to man. Modern conceptions of God all tend to make of him something other than a super-man, to seek such words as "principle" and "process" and "quality" to state the meaning of God. This is a concession to the idea of a universe—a cosmic system of nature which is all-of-a-piece.

Accordingly, there is no area of the supernatural to which to go to escape the world of experience. Granting that our ex-

perience grows and that this very growth shows us realities not included in our previous "nature"; yet the new discoveries are always naturalistic—that is, they do not call for a different sort of cosmic region.

II

Our task is to find an interpretation of the meanings of prayer without recourse to supernaturalism.

What is sought in petitionary prayer? Is it not a sense of reinforcement? At the end of their own strength and knowledge men have felt the need of tapping additional sources of power to increase their own. To feel that they can find that reinforcement in their world, the activity of forces working toward that which they seek—this is the satisfaction men have sought in petitionary prayer. How can this goal be reached in terms of a scientific world view? Here we must abandon petition and try research. Let us find the sources of additional power by learning more about the natural processes which we seek to use. More understanding is the

cure for baffled effort. To understand an illness, or to summon an expert who does, is the best petition for a sick person. When our efforts fail, let us then stop and ask what potential energies we have neglected, what further sources of power in natural laws we have not tapped. This is a period not of feverish activity, but of deliberate quiet in which we ask what secrets nature has that we have failed to reckon with. In this way we achieve new powers of control beyond our present capacity to cope with the situations which confront us.

Prayer has also brought to men a sense of being in harmony with the trend of the universe. "Guidance" meant finding the will of God which they believed to be the controlling force in life. Because the will of God was indomitable, in their view, power could come only through conforming to this will. "In His will is our peace," said men who saw in harmony the end of futile strife. To be at one with the eternal processes, to find the current in the stream of cosmic life and then to swim with it, this was the value of successful communion.

Just as men found in prayer of communion the sense of union with the cosmic power, so we can achieve by realistic search a sense of being in harmony with the processes of the natural world we live in. Successful applied science always rests on correct adjustment to the laws of nature. To get that sense of working *with* and not against the universe is to get power. Scientific achievement is always by conformity to laws, discovered or undiscovered, to which we must submit, save that we may fabricate a dam, a windmill, or piston-rod for them to work through. Until we do achieve unity with the realities that lie behind our life we cannot be secure. This is the peace of communion—the peace we gain through the security of being “in line with the facts” of our world; and we are restless till we rest upon the facts themselves. There are other facts than those comprehended within scientific categories, and other methods of apprehension are needed to reach them. Relaxed quietness on a mountain-side, absorption in some glorious symphony, a little friendly moment with one’s flowers—all

these are ways in which we can learn to feel at one with our world. These are means of communion.

The Prayer of General Confession is an acknowledgment of failures, a taking stock of one's actions. Such acknowledgment produces discontent and goads men into action to transcend their weakness and to rectify the wrong that they have done. This is the real purpose of confessional prayer—to "restore . . . those who are penitent." Such self-criticism is needed by us all; it makes us sensitive, it gives us objectives for the moral life, it helps us to be realistic with ourselves. The morbid self-depreciation which psychiatrists condemn is a product not of confession, but of failure to seek restoration, reclamation of the devastated areas of one's personality. Not recognition of failures, but inactive, futile dwelling upon them produces the depression of despair. Confession should end in consecration.

Spontaneous and hearty thanks is complete in itself—simple expression of indebtedness for the goods that come to us through efforts not our own. When grati-

tude is offered with a view to further favors it is not gratitude but ingratiating; like saying, "Thank you," to mean, "I say I appreciate it, so that you will feel like doing it again!" Gratitude is backward-looking, not forward. It is happy acceptance tinged with humility. Such attitudes expand our horizons through our debts. If we be honest debtors we shall try to liquidate our debts through service.

Thanksgiving is not based on any one theology. It is to declare our gratitude for the goodness of life, acknowledging that much has come to us through efforts not our own; to see our food as the product of farmers' toil, and that in turn rendered productive by laborious studies in some agricultural scientist's laboratory; to don our clothing with a sense of debt to countless workers in some textile trade—this is the prayer of gratitude. And who are we, if we are really grateful, to turn a deaf ear to men whose needs have arisen while they worked to feed and clothe us? Out of the prayer of gratitude service is born. The tragedy is that men have sought the source of these blessings in some far-off

realm; and, while they rendered thanks, have hurt the very folks from whom the blessings came. Let us seek out those to whom our thanks are due, and give them our gratitude not only with our lips but in our lives.

In meditation men summon their ideals and look afresh upon their life in the light of them. The mystic seeks to find the fullest meaning of our common life, by focusing attention upon the whole of which we are but a part. He wants release from the preoccupations and the prejudices of our routine thinking, and hopes through such freedom to come upon new insights—"illuminations," as he calls them.

This all men can do: look at their lives in new perspective, from the standpoint of their highest ideals. In this way we may all get better oriented in the world in which we hurry so blindly all day long. We can find out what our own lives mean, for what purpose we are working so feverishly. Sometimes this simple process may change a man's whole life and send him in quest of what can command his powers

for the largest good. There is something tragic in the disillusionment of a great historical scholar, like Renan, confessing, at the ebb of life, that his studies were futile, that he should have given himself to natural science instead, to add to the world's accumulated knowledge something permanent. Yet many men reach just this stage when they lose their perspective, or when in wider perspective their busy-ness proves to be misdirected. Through meditation we are sensitized afresh to our ideals.

And finally, in consecration men have found the thrill of new adventure into which their life is thrown. We have spoken of this in the last chapter. It is the appeal of new experience, of unknown risks that lie ahead, of self-surrender to a cause, of throwing all one's energies into a fair fight for what we claim as dearest to our hearts. Without consecration religion is tame, monotonous, too "safe and sane."

To make a commitment to that which, in our meditation and our activities combined, we accept as the highest value; to make the resolve to plunge into the stream

of daily living and swim toward the goal—this is consecration. It is the threshold between reflection and action; and over this threshold we step into the larger life, to found new colonies for faith.

III

And yet, it is so difficult to achieve the mood of prayer. The workaday world is an active world, but behind its bustle lies an attitude which the scientific view of life fosters. The aims of science as converted into human affairs of the market place are aggressive. We come to believe that what we want we can go and get, that life yields its secrets to us only as we wrest them from it, that the clue to enrichment of experience is the manipulation of our environment. And in this way we have accomplished astounding benefits for mankind. The chase has yielded its quarry, the pressure of experimental techniques has forced out precious values hidden in a world latent with energies, constructive genius has bridged gaps that held us bound.

But in the midst of this successful policy

of aggressive action we are so apt to forget the things that cannot be won by aggressive action. Most notable among these are those insights into the beauty of music and art, or into the meaning of the great tragedies or blessings of life. The attitude of prayer is in this respect akin to appreciation in art. It is a quiet waiting before the facts that face us, receptive to factors that too eager haste shuts out. Who can *wring* from a sonata the understanding of its spirit, or *experiment* upon a Watteau to learn its meaning, or vigorously *go after* the façade of Rheims to find the secret of its inspiration. There is a discipline of receptivity that appreciation demands, and haste has no part in it. Growing sensitive is not an affair of rapid energy; but without sensitiveness rapidity may go astray. When "fools rush in" they miss too much.

This suggests a rôle of prayer in a world dominated by the spirit of applied science. We need to cultivate awareness of the rich meanings that we cannot readily control. To expose ourselves to such is to find our world afresh, to see new reaches we had

previously ignored, to find ourselves at one with what we had not waited long enough to feel. In this way we learn anew our relationship to the world of which we are a part, and in this perspective the concerns of daily living find their rightful place. Our life achieves a balance that is poise indeed, skeptical in the face of dogmatism, tenaciously conservative in the face of faddism, detached in the face of insistent crowd-mindedness, individualistic in the face of current conventionality, steady in the presence of feverish excitement. And this, so John Cowper Powys says, is the meaning of real culture.



CHAPTER SEVEN

WHAT SIGNIFICANCE HAS JESUS?

THIS is an old problem, as old as the modern revolt against supernaturalism and miracles. For the most critical problem that arises about the traditional story of Jesus is the credibility of a story which includes so many miracles; his life begins with a miracle, his death is followed by a miracle of resurrection, and his life in between is characterized largely by the performance of miracles. What are we to do about all these miracles?

I

Let us first of all ask the inevitable question, What do the witnesses say? This is what scholars call literary criticism, and it raises several difficulties on its own account. To begin with, the Gospels are second-hand accounts. *Mark* is said to be the memoirs of Peter; but *Matthew* and *Luke*,

or the authors of those Gospels, probably did not see Jesus in action. Furthermore, the agreements among the Gospel writers are rather disappointing. Only one miracle of Jesus is recorded in all four Gospels (the feeding of the five thousand); nine healing and two non-healing miracles are given in three Gospels; five healing and one non-healing miracles are given in two gospels; and eleven of the healing and seven of the non-healing miracles appear in only one Gospel.

The story of the virgin birth of Jesus is an interesting case in point. *Mark*, the earliest Gospel and the one most concerned to stress the miraculous, makes no mention of a virgin birth and begins the story with Jesus coming to John the Baptist. In the next Gospel, *Matthew*, the story of the virgin birth is given. But *Luke* adds to the miraculous birth of Christ the miraculous birth of his forerunner, John the Baptist. The Fourth Gospel, written much later, speaks of Christ (the Word) as existing with God prior to his human career and "becoming flesh"; no reference is made to

human birth, and that physical event is rather deliberately ignored.

More striking still is the lack of mutual corroboration in the Gospels for the Resurrection. Unfortunately, our oldest extant copy of *Mark* ends in the middle of a sentence, where the women, going to the tomb to anoint the body of Jesus, were met by "a young man in a white robe" who informed them that Jesus had risen, that he was no longer there, but was keeping his promise to go before the disciples to Galilee. The women fled in bewilderment and held their silence. This *Mark* gives no post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. Furthermore, of the evangelists' accounts of these appearances no single appearance is recorded in the three Synoptic Gospels and only one is told of in any two Gospels (the appearance on the road to Emmaus).

Any examination of the Gospel evidence for the Resurrection appearances must be supplemented by the still earlier accounts of Paul in his letters. But this only raises another question about the early Christian writers, Were they not, by virtue of

the supernaturalistic outlook of their day, prepared to expect miracles? We only see what we are trained by our intellectual environment to see, and sometimes we miss seeing what actually happens, and at other times we see more than actually happens (as when we unconsciously fill in a missing letter in a misspelled word to make up the word we are accustomed to see). We must always remember that the first readers of the New Testament were not nearly so perplexed by miracles as we are, for their world was full of miracles records of which abound in their literature. They were eager to accept miracles; they were free from our inhibitions in the matter.

But there is another method of approaching the miracles. This is the one with which we are more familiar. It is the natural-science approach. Here we ask how could these alleged events—even those substantiated by more than one New Testament writer—ever have happened? They are contrary to natural law. Now a caution to the skeptical is needed at this point, for what we call “natural law” is

really simply the recurrent observations of scientists combined into a generalization. It is therefore necessary to avoid foreclosure of new possibilities by any dogmatic insistence that the discoveries of science are complete. The reversal of skeptical judgment with reference to the healing miracles should give us pause here, for modern psychotherapy has shown that we can believe the events described as miracles of healing from what we have recently learned of functional disorders. We know now that it is possible to cure some diseases which are nervous in origin (psychoneurotic) without recourse to medicine or surgery.

The so-called non-healing miracles of Jesus still constitute a problem, however. Granted that we may some day learn how they were possible, it is also possible that no future scientific findings may show their possibility. In any case, a miracle explained is no longer literally a miracle! When we show a miracle to be naturally possible we destroy its miraculous character.

Let us, then, approach the problem from

another angle—from the historico-religious point of view. We must begin now by asking a different sort of question, Why did the early writers ever tell the miracle stories? When this question is asked a new light breaks. The Gospels, be it remembered, were written as propaganda. (To those who have an aversion to the use of the word in this connection it will be reassuring to learn that the term was first used of Christian missions in the name of the Roman Catholic *Society for Propaganda of the Faith*!) The evangelists were writing no mere descriptions of events, but arguments; they were explaining to readers that Jesus was adequate for men's needs, that he could save men from their physical and moral disabilities to a better life. But their message had to be made convincing for their day.

Now, the first-century world had its stereotyped explanation of genius. Since a genius was some one with powers far enough beyond those of other men to keep men guessing, his powers must be derived from a superhuman source. Consequently, using the simple figure of procreation, men

explained the political genius of Augustus, the military genius of Alexander, the philosophic genius of Plato, the medical genius of Apollonius of Tyana as due to divine paternity—their fathers were gods and their mothers human virgins. What could be a more satisfactory explanation of Jesus' religious genius than to say that he was born of a virgin and the son of God?

In the same way the miracles, paralleled in the literature of Græco-Roman culture, were evidences of his superhuman quality, additional marks of divinity. No one can for a moment deny that the New Testament portrays a supernatural Jesus. Does this mean, then, that we can get nothing from the Gospels; that Jesus perhaps never lived and that the whole story is a piece of supernatural mythology? Let us take these two questions one at a time.

II

Was Jesus himself a mythical figure? Some scholars have taken the position that Jesus never lived, and it is not easy to answer them. The most concise review

of this whole problem is to be found in S. J. Case, *The Historicity of Jesus*, and the following paragraphs are simply summary statements of points which he develops more fully there.

The source of the difficulty lies in the scanty records of Jesus outside the Christian tradition. Taking the impartial view that evidence from within any movement will be biased, the historian asks for corroborative evidence in external sources. And here the Christian is embarrassed, for none of the Roman literature of Jesus' day makes any mention of him. In the writings of Josephus, the Jewish historian of the late first century, two references occur one of which is undoubtedly a Christian copyist's insertion, while the other merely speaks of "Jesus, the so-called Messiah," and gives no details. Tacitus, writing at the end of the century, has a reference based on hearsay. More disappointing still is the absence of any reference to the historical career of Jesus in Paul's writings, the earliest after the alleged life of Jesus was finished. Paul only speaks of the crucified and resurrected

Lord; but this figure was common in Roman society, referring as well to Osiris, Mithra, Attis, and Adonis, all of whom *were* mythical figures. The crisis comes when the liberal theological scholar must admit that the historical study of the Gospels has yielded very little assurance of the Jesus-behind-the-Gospels. This discouraging conclusion is reached after an exhaustive survey by Albert Schweitzer in his *Quest of the Historical Jesus*.

If it is so difficult to prove that Jesus ever did exist, how, then, are we to account for the origins of Christianity? Various alternative explanations have been offered: (1) that Joshua (=Jesus), son of Miriam (=Mary), was a Palestinian savior-sun-god; (2) that the Christian myth is an adaptation of an old Babylonian epic of a hero Gilgamesh; (3) that this is an astral myth with Jesus as the sun and the twelve disciples personified signs of the zodiac; (4) that it is the revival of an old Jewish Joshua-cult; or (5) that the movement originated in the second century in a combination of Jewish Messianic hope, Stoic philosophy, and the

communistic trade-guild life of the time with its rules of mutual hospitality and service. Into the difficulties which these alternative explanations present we cannot go now. Suffice it to say that they are full of pure conjectures and of indiscriminate confusions, as Professor Case so clearly shows.

We are thus left with meager historical verification outside of the inevitably biased Christian tradition, on the one hand, and with unconvincing alternatives offered on the other hand. What can we do? Let us look with Dr. Case at the positive side of the issue.

In the first place, Christianity was too strongly entrenched in the Empire by the beginning of the second century to be a product of that century. Pliny, governor of Bithynia, writing to the Emperor Trojan in 110 A.D. in response to Trojan's inquiry, gives reassuring testimony that the Christians of his day were law-abiding citizens and not subversive of government. Apparently they were numerous enough by then to cause the Emperor concern.

Again, Christianity carried too strong a

Jewish flavor of ethical, monotheistic religion ever to be explainable in terms of Gentile origins.

Joshua=Jesus might be a significant coincidence were it not that Joshua was as common a name in Hebrew as John in English. To take the coincidence as foundation for a whole theory is as unconvincing as to try to prove that Washington was really the English king of Revolutionary War days because his name was George.

Now, if Christianity was so well established by 110 as Pliny's letter implies, then its mythology must have been well under way in the first century. But the "myth" places the founder in the time of Pontius Pilate. This would mean that people were asked in the latter half of the first century to accept as true a mythical character who was a contemporary of people still living! Myths have to be dated far enough back to escape at least first-hand investigation!

An important distinction needs to be made at this point between myth and legend. Myth is the play of fancy making

stories out of sheer imagination. Legend is the play of fancy around a kernel of historical fact. That the story of Jesus has legendary elements may be admitted without denying that he ever lived.

Perhaps the most convincing evidence of the historicity of Jesus comes from the fact that the Gospels include irrelevant and often unfortunate details of Jesus' life. If a mythical figure were being constructed, the myth would obviously embody items which had bearing upon the movements whose origins were being explained; irrelevant matter would hardly suggest itself. Still less would unfavorable incidents be included, such as *Mark's* bald account of Jesus cursing the fig tree for not having fruit when the season for figs had not come. It is these very details that bear the stamp of genuineness.

When to these arguments is added the possibility of the truth of Tacitus's reference to the Christians persecuted by Nero being named for the Christ who was put to death by Pontius Pilate, and of Suetonius's mention of a "new and odious superstition" of the "Christians," there

seems no adequate reason to deny the essential truth of Jesus' having lived.

This being so, let us then turn to the other part of our inquiry and ask what is the use of reading Gospels that seem to confuse fact and fiction. Well, what the Gospels sought to demonstrate, with the aid of miraculous stories, was that Jesus was fully able to save men, because of his spiritual genius. Now the fact of genius does not depend upon any one theory of genius. To explain a man's musical ability through phrenology by the bumps on his skull may be absurd, but he does not cease thereby to be a musical genius. If our explanation of genius today leads us to look in a different direction for our tests, may it not be that the first-century theory of miraculous proof can be discarded without losing the essential fact?

What we are looking for in Jesus is the same thing that his contemporaries sought—assurance that he is able to lead men into more adequate living. (Some one recently defined "being saved" as "not being wasted," and this is a very satisfactory definition of salvation.) There are three

sorts of leaders, if we may follow the sociological suggestion of Professor E. T. Krueger. There is the *enunciatory* leader, the man who can "put it in a nutshell," who can coin a phrase to sum up the desires of men. Wilson was such a leader, a slogan-maker whose pat phrases welded men into a common loyalty in the "war for democracy" after he had announced that America is "too proud to fight," until "the right is more precious than peace." Then there is the *executive* leader, the man who "gets it done," who can translate the vague wishes of the followers into a clear plan of action and execute it. Here we envisage a Mussolini waving aside political principles to achieve a needed reform. And again, there is the *exemplary* leader, the man who embodies our ambitions in his own person. Lindbergh, the exponent of cool daring, is a sample of what men would like to be. Occasionally an outstanding leader is at once the spokesman, the executor, and the embodiment of people's ambitions. Such a man, in American history, was Abraham Lincoln, spokesman of men's deeper longings, preserver of

union with freedom, exemplar of the homely virtues of simple greatness.

To men looking for all-around leadership Jesus is offered by the Gospels as adequate for their needs. His teachings present an ideal that offers satisfaction of men's needs in social relations and in personal integrity; his program of action was daring, and the poise he gave to those about him wins our admiration; his personality with its fine balance counterpoised contrasting virtues of energy and patience; of intolerance of sham and sympathy with honest failures; of depth of insight and simplicity of manner; of acceptance of life's conditions and refusal to submit to anything short of his ideal.

The genius is some one who diverges from the normal development in his traits of character; but so is the insane man. "Genius is akin to insanity" in that both show supernormal development of certain mental functions. But genius is the term we apply when we adjudge the individual's divergence to be socially productive; if it is socially unproductive we call him insane. The test of genius, therefore, lies in

the judgment of the generations as to the social value of an extraordinary man's achievements. Jesus is a genius for us if in his teachings and his life he embodies the values that we seek. Our confidence that he does so is the measure of our belief in him.



CHAPTER EIGHT

WHERE OUR RELIGION CAME FROM

THE influence of Darwin upon our thought about religion has been more positive than negative. Fearful folk may lose sight of the deeper quests of religion in their preoccupation with particular formulations like the creeds, and see in Darwin merely the archenemy of an earlier theology. Their fears are sound. But the contribution which Darwinian implications have made to our religious outlook far outweighs the importance of any specific creed. For we have acquired a new attitude in popular thinking. It is connoted by the word *adjustment*, and its introduction into religious thinking has lent a new meaning to the place of religion in life. Religion is our total adjustment to the world in which we live. It is our organized response to the meaning of the whole of life.

Maladjustment is due to two causes.

Either one does not take in the whole situation or one proves incapable of making new types of responses. There is either lack of perspective or inflexibility. We fail to adjust because we have not got our bearings, or because, having sensed new items in our environment, we cannot break the inertia of habit and react in new ways. This is true of the religious life, and many of our religious difficulties arise from failing to see our own position in relation to the historical growth of religion or to the operation of religion in society as a whole. We shall therefore devote the present chapter and the next to getting perspective historically and sociologically.

It is not easy to summarize the development of religion in the race. There is no single line of development that can be traced in religion any more than in other areas of evolution. Then there is such a variety of religions in the world, and such a variety of phases of any one religion. We shall here confine ourselves to the main steps in the development of the par-

ticular religious tradition which lies behind our Western culture. That is to say, we shall trace the growth of religion as it emerges from uncertain primitivity into the Hebrew ethnic faith and branches off into Christianity, which, in response to changing cultural and economic forces, seeks ever new modes of expressing its quest.

I

Primitive man encountered from time to time, as we do, objects, persons, and occurrences which fell outside the range of his accustomed experience. They were extraordinary. They puzzled him and he could only say in mingled awe and fear or admiration, "Ah!" It was a sort of breathless exclamation such as we might utter before that which is unutterably strange or lovely or fearsome. This "Ah!" is, in one of the South Sea Islands dialects, translated *mana*; and has been generally accepted as the nearest thing to the original religious experience which anthropology can find. But *mana* is in Polynesian both an adjective and a noun. It expresses

the nature of the object and a property of the object from the standpoint of man's emotional reaction to it. It is that which "keeps one guessing," like sleight-of-hand performances. In fact, Ludwig has shown that prestige originally meant juggling, and only in modern French became a name for the subtle quality which is attributed to the person whom we cannot quite fathom. In primitive life prestige was accorded to any person, thing, or happening that was mystifying, and hence arose the notion of spirits which moved the tree bough that strangely slapped the primitive woodsman in the face, and the arrow that unfailingly reached its mark, the chieftain who governed with uncanny insight, and the medicine-man who cured the sufferer with his incantations and concoctions.

But there was also an area of strange things surrounding the human body. When a man walked in sun or moonlight a fantastic shadowy form always accompanied him; when he looked into a pool his face and headdress and his whole front gazed back at him; when he shouted in

the woods or over the lake his double would repeat his words in eerie tones; and as he lay down to sleep at night his other self could travel far—two days' journey off and back again by morning—in hunt for game, or talk with friends whose buried bodies no more spoke in waking hours. The strange double, this *mana* self, whence did it come? All sorts of objects had it. Did not the standing wigwam have a shadow? Had not the tree a double in the lake? Was not the dog's loud bark repeated by its soul?

Up from such spirits rose the gods—gods of the natural phenomena of earth and sun, spring and storm; gods of the swift deer, the flying bird, the powerful bear; hero-gods out of the dead past when ancestors sagaciously had taught the arts of war and founded victorious tribes; gods of the rites whose presence men could feel in the exalted feelings of group ceremonial; gods to account for origins—creator gods; and tutelary gods of marriage, health, and hunt. Thus grew the myths, and gods were made to live as supermen in Egypt, Palestine and ancient Greece.

The organizing genius of a Hesiod or a Homer created a family life upon Olympus, the great mythology on which the Romans drew.

Meanwhile, man sought control of *mana*. Uncanny men, branded from birth as strange and abnormal, were trained to induce *mana* from other beings to enter themselves in trances. These were the *shamans*, medicine-men, whom it is so hard to distinguish from the priests of primitivity. Special ways of acting secured special powers of *mana* origin—the magical performances; and often the whole group was present when the god was approached or summoned in religious rites.

II

Out of such crude beginnings came the great Hebrew religion of the Old Testament. Indeed, we find traces of the cruder thoughts and practices throughout the earlier historical accounts. Here is Beer-sheba, "the well of the oath," where Abraham called on the name of God and planted a tree; and that other well where Hagar, the outcast, found "him that liveth

and seeth me" (Genesis 16:14). Or read of the witch of Endor, that early medium, who summoned forth the soul of Samuel for Saul to question. Let it not be forgotten that Jehovah was a mountain god of Horeb, who spoke in the storm and dwelt in the cloud. Indeed, the early bands of prophets were ecstasies who induced the *mana* potency through music (I Samuel 10:5 f.; II Kings 4:15).

To early Semitic tribes wandering from Mesopotamia into Palestine and finding themselves eventually an oppressed minority under Egyptian rule in Goshen, the years of servitude had brought a sense of the superior power of Re the god of Egypt. How could any god of their fathers help them when they were in the domain of another god? Yet there came a man from the hills of Midian, a refugee from Egyptian justice (so the story went), who, fleeing to Midian, had there learned of the local deity, Yahweh (Jehovah), a god of the mountain and of storm. The lightning god of fire and cloud had been a common heritage of Midianite and Hebrew alike;

and Moses became certain that God could save His people from the hand of Pharaoh.

Thus to the Hebrews, rescued now from bondage, Yahweh became a god of battles. Under the tutelage of Jethro, Midianite farmer-priest and father of Moses' wife, the older men were initiated into the ancient cult now new to them (Exodus 18:12), at Sinai. Driving their flocks before them, the Hebrews ventured forth across the desert, a nomad people. Many were afraid to leave the regions of their protector god and wondered if he could go with them to Canaan. Building an Ark, they took him in it with them. Thanks to the insight of a woman, they gained their reassurance that he could come from Sinai to give them victory, if they just called to him.

But when Yahweh of the flocks came to the land of fertile soil there arose in the minds of his half-hearted worshipers a serious question as to his capabilities. So impossible did it seem for a god of herds and flocks to meet the needs of an agricultural life like that in Canaan, that many turned to the Canaanitish deities (the

Baalim) for help. The Baalim had had experience in agriculture and gave the Canaanitish farmers good crops, so why not seek their aid? But the apostles of the old nomadic life and its simplicity in contrast with the urban wickedness of Canaan were adamant. Their spokesman, Elijah, declared a war to the death on Baal worship, claiming that Yahweh was a greater god than the emasculated deities of the old residents. It was Hosea who by peaceful arguments gave Yahweh the powers hitherto reserved to Baalim. Who was it gave the apostate Hebrews corn and flax and oil? Yahweh of Sinai, the unrecognized husband of an unfaithful nation, who ran after other lovers (the Baalim) for these gifts. And so the god of flocks became a god of crops as well.

The Hebrews prospered in their chosen land. They made the transition from nomadry to settled agriculture and to commercial enterprise. David had welded them into a united and influential national state. His foolish son, Solomon, lost most of his father's solid gains for superficial fame, and left a legacy of mingled

bitterness and polish. Worship had been centralized in Jerusalem and the beginnings of a cultural life achieved. When the aftermath of civil war had spent itself the country rose to economic levels scarcely dreamed before; the smug, rich worshippers went up the Temple steps to offer thanks while their victims lay stripped even of the legal minimum of clothing. The rottenness of insincerity, laid bare by Amos, honeycombed the structure of the state, and in the face of the inevitable doom the righteous reared a great utopian dream—when human frailties left the nation undefended the god of battles would return, the day of the Lord would then be ushered in.

With tragic stupidity, ignoring all lessons of the flat failure of the neighboring states, the Israelitish kings courted disaster in rebellion against the imperial power of the Assyrian kings. The northern tribes were exiled from their land and never found again. The survivors to the south, the men of Judah, fared no better, despite the weary pleas of the great patriot-critic, Jeremiah. Disintegration moved too fast,

and with it grew apace the spirit of individualism, accentuated for religion by the conspiracy of silence of the priests. To Jeremiah, imprisoned for seditious utterance because he counseled peace (how modern does it sound!), bereft of all his friends, few as they were, and thrown alone into the arms of his all-seeing God—to this man, prophet of prophets, came the gleam. Individualism in him was joined to anti-ecclesiasticism. His God became a God of every soul that sought the face of the Eternal, regardless of religious cult. Monotheism came into full flower under the clouds of national demise.

Down came the thunderbolt. The new Babylonian power had come to crush the rebellion, and the rebels were taken into the land of the captors to form a sort of penal colony along the Euphrates River. To the stupid rulers, the scheming politicians, the punishment was due; but what of men who, like Ezekiel, felt no guilt or shame? How could the hand of God be seen in this bedeviled chance? With patience does the great unknown poet-theologian of the exile frame his answer.

Suffering is not a punishment, it is a test. To any man who, suffering, shows in his life his innocence, shall come the would-be scoffers with a fertile query in their hearts: perchance "he was punished for *our* misdeeds, and with *his* stripes *we* are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

Minds still dominated by the consciousness of national guilt mulled over the past and its disasters. All history became alight with meaning, and the hand of God was seen carefully guiding men who with rebellious hearts continually scorned his guidance and fell into the pitfalls of their enemies. So reads the theological history of the Chronicler. But righteousness was now no longer bound up with the cult of the Temple. The Temple was no more; and God must dwell not in such temples made with hands, but in the human heart. This had been the insight of Jeremiah. It was also the foundation of the synagogue, which freed religion from geography.

Finally they came from exile, many with dubious hearts. Had they not, these second-generation exiles, learned to live happily in Babylonia? Were not its ways

largely their ways? Did they not make a fair living there; surely better than the prospects of uphill reconstruction in a devastated area like their homeland? What if the curious in Babylon did taunt them to "sing a song of Zion"! Was not that better than hunger in a barren land? And so this early Zionist movement for colonization of the Holy Land went slowly, for the difficulties encountered by the pioneers were all they feared and more.

Ridden with taxes imposed by the Persian Cyrus, harassed by neighboring tribes that wished them naught but ill, struggling with failing crops and failing courage, the Jews were driven to find morale in racial pride. Intermarriage became a heinous sin and all that served to mark their differences was stressed as part of a new purist, "holiness" code of law. The power of priesthood grew unrivaled by any royal claims, since Persian policy forbade political autonomy. With no national politics to exercise their thought, as pioneering days passed on to greater security they came to speculate on the great problems of human existence. The petty na-

tionalistic reaction to earlier persecutions had produced the shallow hatreds of *Joel* and some *Psalms*; against which the broader sympathies of international thought stand out in favorable contrast in the lovely (even if querulous) novel of *Ruth*, and the incisive allegory of *Jonah*, the vindictive hundred-per-center. Now men began to question easy dogmas of the past, under the influence, perhaps, of the Hellenic spirit in philosophy. Does the smug surety that all ill deeds produce their penalty of suffering, and good is invariably rewarded by prosperity—does this old doctrine of the writers of *Judges* really hold water? The Book of *Job* dramatically answers "No!" despite the editorial efforts to sustain the orthodox arguments with vain repetitions placed in the mouth of Elihu. Has life a meaning man can understand? Does the divine governance of human life yield any sense? It is hard to find, if such there be, replies the gentle cynic of *Ecclesiastes*. With these and other dangerous queries on the lips of men, the sages looked for simple rules to guide the common man on safer paths. From

scattered sources was compiled the lore of ages in proverbial form. *Proverbs* was the *American Magazine* philosophy of that day: be circumspect, industrious, and "sane," and you shall prosper well. And in this advice of complacency there is reflected, too, a suspicion of the new-fangled ideas coming in—was it from Greece?—about the gracefulness of women of the world.

Meanwhile the great Alexander had arrived, passing like lightning from the western sea to Persia and to farther India, never to return. In his wake were left the governors of conquered lands: the Ptolemies in Egypt and the Seleucids up north in Syria. The Palestinian section of the fertile crescent was the ground of rivalry between these two outposts of empire, with Jewry split within itself as to which advances it should court for its own good. With that political misfortune that had dogged their steps from ancient times the Jews were found upon the side of Ptolemy when the Seleucids proved more powerful. As punishment for their perfidy the Jews were kept under a grinding heel whose

pressure grew. The patience of the nation broke when Antiochus IV stupidly overstepped the bounds of their religious purity and committed the blasphemous desecration of setting up Apollo's idol on the great altar of the Temple. Led by the family of the Maccabees, the smoldering hatreds flared into bloody rebellion, spreading like Scottish clan war from one highland to the next. Before the savage fury of these mountain cats who knew the secret gullies of their hills, the ordered ranks of Græco-Syrian troops were hopelessly futile. Though the war raged and shifted over its small zone, and losses seemed terrific at the time, the end soon came. For propaganda had sustained the Jews' morale with glowing promises of God's great day, long promised, now to come, when those who proved unwavering in their patriotism should enter—even from death—into His deathless régime. The vigorous language of the ill-concealed imagery of *Daniel* stirred the loyalties of Jewish men into an omnipotent alliance of piety and patriotism. The Maccabees won and Jewry was set free.

With victory came a brief career of political independence. The Maccabean rule became the Hasmonean dynasty. But by a paradox, the very Hellenism which had been driven out by Maccabean bravery in arms found its way back by Hasmonean intrigue. Rival claimants of the throne outdid one another in showing themselves receptive to the Hellenistic culture of the Romans, for whose support they bargained. In fact they overreached themselves in Hellenization till they became as crude as Antiochus IV himself, and Jewish piety preserved itself in the strict legalism of "the holy ones" from whom the Pharisees seem to have sprung. With religious fervor thus separated from political loyalty among the Jews, the entrance of the Roman was a simple matter; but still their failure rankled in discontented Jewish breasts.

Under the Roman rule the symbol of Jewish independence was its theocratic system; but the priestly leaders operated under close surveillance of the foreigner. Accordingly, the Sadducean hierarchy played its game warily, seeking to gain

the most with least concession. The pietistic Pharisees maintained their hostility to cosmopolitanism and stressed meticulous details as outward signs of a most earnest, single-hearted consecration to God. The revolutionary dreamers, spiritual descendants of the great Maccabees, waited impatiently for another leader like Mattathias; the Zealots were tinder for any fanatical flame. But the great masses, "the people of the land," endured the hierarchy, respected the Pharisees as far above their own devotion, admired the Zealots—but distrustfully—and went their own way, making ends meet as best they could with Temple tax and Roman taxes too; tolerant of other folks and dumbly confident that God would find a way to bring them into glory. Confused by the varied pictures of a military power that ground the oppressive Roman under heel, of a peaceful life where pious joys would come untrammelled by the clamorings of war, of some mysterious wonder-world let down by angels, vicegerents of God—confused by the conflicting hopes men raised for them, the multitudes lived out their lives

around the synagogues which served as court-house, school, and church.

III

Out from these masses there stepped forth a simple carpenter. Raised in a district where the intrigues of theocrats were far away, he shared the common lot of all his kind. Hard by his little town of Nazareth there passed the caravans of merchants carrying pearls and purple dyes and *objets d'art*, and barely an hour west and north was Sepphoris, a Roman garrison, the while he plied his trade and weighed his dreams. This Jesus, son of Joseph, took his dead father's place and learned to know the tasks of fatherhood: watchful of children's needs, eager to shelter them, yet anxious for their independent growth, reaching out often in crises with a heart too full for words, and always asking of them naught but honest lives.

A strange man was drawing men to Jordan's banks with that selfsame demand for honesty. To John went Jesus, and heard the great appeal. Here sounded forth again the old prophetic cry that Yahweh judges

men for moral cleanness, not for outward powers. If John was stern with the directness of the countryside, well, Jesus understood that too. And so this Nazarene joined up with John. The fellowship was marred by John's repeated stress upon God's anger, which seemed to hold man off till he would grovel in repentance on the ground. If God were Father, as many rabbis taught, how could a father be so pitiless? Surely demands for righteous conduct could be made without a father yielding his watchful love and compassion, or shutting his eyes to weakling children struggling on alone! The two men thought too differently, and Jesus took John's zeal, but blended it with kindness into a different message which he himself would preach.

Here was a prophet greater than his teacher; in whom the well-read saw again Hosea, apostle of divine yearning, joined to Isaiah, promiser of help, yet carrying enough intolerance of pious sham to sound like old Elijah come again. The simple message caught at men's hearts and held them; a simple thought, but capable of infinite reflection—if men would live

as if God's kingdom were to come tonight and they must be prepared with hearts free from all malice, greed, or sham, and eager to serve the needy clad in foulest rags, behold! the kingdom would have come! These easy words that reached the weary souls dispensed with Zealot battles, Pharisaic rules, and Sadducean machinations; but how they stung the pride of the ecclesiastic, and the pomposity of silly knaves who thought to hide their frailties beneath a show of bigness or of learned reasoning! Such men were in the saddle at the time, and looked askance at this young upstart, thirty years or so, untrained, a Galilean, with the smell of pitch, still about him.

The silent conflict grew, as Jesus found the crowds coming to him who first had gone to them. When open opposition to his work was raised by scribes, the learned doctors of the law, he knew they meant to catch him when they could. Wondering how far his popularity connoted understanding of his message, he came at Cæsarea Philippi to the heart-rending discovery—they cared less for his teaching,

which had proved more subtle than their minds at first had grasped, than for the outward show of power when people found that his presence strangely cured their ills. Those who might recreate the Jewish world—and others, too—by full committal of themselves to his plan, the most receptive to his ideas were deserting him. Even his little band of companions lapsed from time to time into petty rivalries and greed of power. The bitter disillusionment by men had come, but still he had his faith that God would come only as he had said, in human hearts. Living this faith, he went to the lion's lair at Jerusalem, wrapped in his thoughts. A shallow burst of loyalty attended his entrance to Jerusalem, the city he would have made the spiritual capital of the domain of love; but soon the same old apathy to truth. The end came rapidly, a dangerous notion quickly put away on Calvary. But loveliness of living never dies, and those whose honest souls had seen his last unwavering loyalty were sure that he was still a living force.

The early followers, reassembled in Je-

rusalem, made plans to carry on the prophetic program Jesus had laid down, and to make the attempt in their own group life to live out the ideals he had set before them. As good Jews they attended the Temple rites and the synagogues, and tried to explain to fellow-Jews their expectation that Jesus would himself usher in the Kingdom of God. The anti-ecclesiastical and anti-legalistic trend of Jesus' career characterized the early preachers of the Jesus group, which came to be regarded more and more as a heretical sect. As official opposition to them grew, the Christians in Jerusalem drew into themselves and resorted to a rudimentary sort of informal organization to take care of the needy in their midst. They formed a sort of board of deacons of which the chairman was Stephen.

It remained for Paul, proud citizen of Tarsus, to lead Christianity into larger pastures. Born of strict Pharisaic family, he was raised a Roman citizen, in a center of Greek culture. The inner conflict of Roman, Greek, and Jew was repressed, while the repression manifested itself in

fanatical insistence upon obedience to the Jewish law, and bitter intolerance of the Christian heresy. With psychological inevitability, the persecutor became a convert, and found the solution of his conflict in a message which combined the world ambitions of the Roman, the Greek's religious receptivity to new ideas, and the strong ethical monotheism of the Jew. This message came to be known as his Gentile Gospel.

To take the message of the Christ to Gentiles meant inevitable changes. The homogeneous outlook of the Jews guaranteed an understanding of the Gospel that was relatively uniform. But the Gentile audience to which Paul appealed was heterogeneous. Here was a Roman soldier lately returned from eastern posts where he had added to his gods the name of Mithra, messenger of light and conqueror of darkness, who would some day come again from Mazda's throne to bring in his victorious realm of light and goodness. Over there stood a merchant from the Nile, worshiper of Isis, goddess shrouded in mystery, and of Osiris, whom she had

raised from the dead to live eternally, despite the machinations of his enemies. That Phrygian artisan had placed his faith in Cybele the Great Mother, consort of resurrected Attis, whose resuscitation symbolized both immortality and the fertility of life itself. This Syrian damask salesman boasted the lovely Venus for his deity, who raised the beautiful Adonis from death. Clad in the stern simplicity of those who find no joy in silly baubles, the Stoic listens, wondering the while if "the indwelling Christ" of whom Paul speaks might be the same as *Logos*, that divine spark that burns in man, akin to the Eternal.

They listen eagerly, these varied types, and, caught up into the thrill of Paul's great dream, they vow their loyalty to Christ; and then—they wonder how Christ saves a man, and if the great Messiah be a god, a king, or a philosopher. Here came the problem Paul's enthusiasm raised—how could the faith be just alike for all these men? He sought for words to make Christ real and found them in the language of the cults these men had for-

merly espoused; so Christ became "the great high priest" and "Lord of lords"; or the dying and resurrected savior-god who once again must come to judge men's loyalty to light; or he was that within a man which, once perceived, became sufficient reason for all life and superseded man-made laws—the law divine incarnate in the soul. The preacher "became all things to all men, if haply he might save a few" and made his Christ the same. It was inevitable that differences of opinion should grow up, and variety of interpretation overshadow unity of faith.

Out of such variety grew confusion which eastern speculation only served to confound still worse. Those views which led the Christian too far afield into dangerous proximity to other religions or philosophies which as a whole were out of harmony with the spirit of Christianity, were branded as heresies. Later, recalcitrant adherents of such views were forced outside the circle of the Christian group and became sects "cut off" from the main branch. So long as persecution met them from the emperors, fearful of the seditious

sound of phrases like "kingdom not of this world soon to come," or "Lord of lords" applied to another than Cæsar, and suspicious of the secret meetings of the little groups whose byword was "O Lord, come!"—so long the common peril held them together. But when the fires died down, security begot dissension.

When Constantine, sensing the growing influence of the cult, decided to enlist its aid by tolerance, he found himself baffled by rival groups which claimed to speak for all. Antipathies of east and west, which met at Ephesus as at a cultural frontier, underlay differences as to doctrine or government; and petty jealousies in the Levant were only waiting for the Arian controversy to define the lines of battle. One Arius, popular subordinate of the Bishop of Alexander, had declared that Jesus was distinct from God. In this he was following the Jewish mode of thought and in harmony also with the Oriental mystery cults as well as with Roman polytheism. But if Jesus *were* divine, then Christianity was a polytheistic faith, and this was unthinkable to a cult with Paul-

ine precedents. At Nicea the leaders of the Church, assembled in solemn council, declared Jesus to be "of one substance with the Father" and yet a distinct "person" of a triune Godhead. Thus was the faith saved from the fate of absorption in Roman polytheism, while the divinity of Christ, infinite savior of all men, was conserved, though it kept the best brains of Christendom busy for fifty years defending the formula.

A theological system based on the Greek philosophy that Paul the rabbi had failed to comprehend gave intellectual respectability to the newly arrived faith; though with the shift from eastern to western domination in Church control, Oriental speculation was overshadowed by Roman practicality. The nature of the Godhead gave less concern than penance and atonement.

Following the model of the imperial system, the organization of the Church grew into an impressive hierarchy with graded powers from the local bishop (=overseer) to the provincial archbishop and the imperial pope. For, with the de-

clining prestige of the quarrelsome eastern bishops and the removal of the imperial court from ancient Rome to new Byzantium (Constantinople), the Bishop of Rome became the head of all the universal Church.

The ritual grew from simple Jewish practices to splendid ceremonial into which were poured the richest meanings of the pagan cults in symbols and in liturgies. The venerated acts became alive with power, even where converts, introduced *en masse* when Theodosius made the Christian cult imperative, knew naught or little of the ethical demands that underlay the rites. But still there lingered on, though sometimes strangely relaxed, the discipline established by Saint Paul. The Church became the moral censor; the priestly authority found that censorship at once a burden and a chance for power.

Thus centralized, the Roman Catholic Church assumed great power, enhanced as it alone survived out of the wreck of what was mighty Rome. Yet quietly the supreme authority fell into decline. The dialectic answers of the schoolmen were

proof of troubling questions from without, and they themselves, caught in the web of their own fine-spun logic, lost the thread of faith only to find it in regions of revelation where the reason could not penetrate. Their rationalistic disputations meanwhile provoked the mystics to revolt, till Church scholarship was in danger of being bereft of authority by simple mystic visions like those of a Meister Eckhart, which throbbed with real piety. Monastic orders rose in protest against corruption in the higher seats of the clergy, but themselves soon became too rich for piety and found rude challenge in the wandering friars.

Crusades to save the Holy Land might serve to stem awhile the tide of unrest, but they themselves created new contacts with the orient, that promised more of trade and new ideas (forerunners of heresy) than of submission to ecclesiastics' bidding. When foreign crusades against the infidel produced heretics at home in direct proportion to the number of crusaders from a given country, the Church then turned the loyalty of her best

men against the heretics—Albigensians, Waldensians, or Cathari—or else she reaffirmed the orthodox teaching in councils issuing decrees, and sent her friars up and down the lands of Europe to preach a sound gospel, and used the Inquisition to terrorize the critic of the Church.

The storm was soon to break. Nations, rising to consciousness of their own power, resented papal economic practices that cut across their national integrity. The Black Death left the churches leaderless. Avignon and Rome, each with a rival pope, the “vicegerent of God,” became the scandal and the laughing stock of thoughtful men like Wyclif and the Bohemian Huss. And with it all, the humanistic renaissance of Greek free-thinking and naturalism tended inevitably away from authoritarianism and the ascetic discipline of faith. A Savonarola might cry out against the new culture, but the crest of it would pass him by. Such forces, then, were instrumental in fomenting the Protestant revolt, which opened many avenues of thought it scarcely dared to follow—religion free from clerical restraint; the

chance for each man to state what God's word meant to him; freedom for worship as each one thought fit. ✓

IV

Yet barely had the fight been won in northern Europe by the Protestants when Protestantism itself began to disintegrate. For a new force had appeared before the Reformation to attack the authority of revelation. This was the scientific spirit, initiated with the simple advice of Roger Bacon that men should learn to know their world by observation rather than by speculative thought. Just when Aquinas was compiling all extant knowledge into an encyclopædia, Bacon was showing the futility of the scholastic learning. This was in the thirteenth century. Fostered by Arab alchemy and astrology, the experimental movement grew; new knowledge came to upset old ideas—Da Vinci observing fossils, Copernicus and Brahe making records of the stellar movements for Kepler to weave into a new astronomy verified with the telescope of Galileo (which obscurantist enemies declared bewitched).

Add to this the discoveries of Columbus and Magellan sustaining the earth's sphericity. By this time Protestants were worried as much as Catholics over the new disclosures which forced the world-view of millennia back against the wall under a withering fire of facts.

Newton came soon, born just as Galileo died (in 1642), and showed the law of gravity among the planets. The seventeenth century found Descartes seeking the soul in the pineal gland, and offering the suggestion that the earth came into being by incandescence. In the next century microscopic forms were first observed by Leeuwenhoek, while Buffon sought to show that the earth was not 6,000, but more likely 75,000, years old. Barely had men ceased gasping at this startling news which made man a less pretentious figure in the world, than Darwin placed the human race among the animals.

Not only was the world of nature changed, but men found the Bible changing from some supernatural oracle to a collection of historical documents. Coupled with this, the study of the history

of Judaism and Christianity led men to revise conceptions of a final faith; for now they saw that the various religious teachings were men's attempts to state their faith and their ideals in words of their day. The Bible became a cultural product, clothed in the language of successive culture epochs, though dealing with ever-recurrent problems of human life.

When other faiths around the world escaped the narrow stigma of "superstitions" and were allowed to speak, men came to see that no one religion had a monopoly of beauty, truth, or goodness, that there were values which a Westernized Christianity might well reflect upon and possibly adopt. History of religions is a comparatively recent study, and the questions it has raised have scarcely yet been faced.

Then came the newest sciences of human behavior—psychology and sociology. When men's minds were turned from the cultural accidents to the common religious practices of the great faiths of mankind, the way was open for the psychology of religion. To be sure, some re-

ligionists may fear this newest science or hold it in contempt or give it some epithet; but such contempt disguising fear was suffered before in history by other sciences. Now when psychology is studying processes of religious prayer or belief or mystic insight we have become uncomfortable about ourselves. If we find security in a group, the sociologist begins to ask why crowds believe, how ritual succeeds in heightening men's sense of some great power at work among them. The most penetrating questions that we face today come from these sciences, for they are at the citadel of all our faith when they ask, "What is the spiritual life?" and, "Is God needed for the integration of personality?"

V

Before such critical questions men have behaved religiously in different ways. Some have just clung to the faith they inherited and reasserted it in defiance of change, and sometimes sought to stamp out heresy. The Roman Catholic Church at Trent defined accepted faith, and soon

the Jesuits went forth, conservers of orthodoxy. More recently we in our day have witnessed the effort to muzzle the men who speak for new ideas in biology or psychology. This is conservatism.

Others find refuge in some earlier day when all the new crises of faith had not arisen. These are the romanticists. They go back to the Middle Ages, or back to the Primitive Church, or back to the simple emotions from which religion sprang, hoping thereby to find some basis for faith untouched by all this recent questioning. As a reaction against the earlier rationalism of the eighteenth century, romanticism flourished in France and Germany with Rousseau, Goethe, and, in Christian theology, with Schleiermacher, the scholar who called religion "a feeling of absolute dependence."

Still others, disillusioned, and violently so, turn revolutionists when they confront old dogmas and institutions with new facts. "Let us root out the old, root, stock, and branch," they say, "and make a brand-new start." New cults arise cut off from all tradition, but, continuity cannot be

broken quite so easily. Theological humanism is, in some quarters, just such a revolutionary attitude. Militant atheism is negative revolutionism.

The mystic, troubled by all the wrangling in the outer world between established faiths and heretics, may seek within him some sure source of light. Yet, because the self wherein he seeks is part and parcel of the common life, he finds himself forced to make some terms with other men if he is to find peace within.

Finally, there are those who try to find not only facts of science, but the meaning of men's faith to the men themselves. Then with these materials they attempt a reconstruction of that faith in terms of facts, but all the while preserving the personal integrity of the believer. Such constructive optimists believe that we *can* find materials in the common fund of our experience to construct a faith that is alive to modern issues, continuous with past experience, and thus able to bring men through to larger faith because it gives what the older dogmas sought to phrase in earlier terminology.

This is the task to which this book is addressed—to seek a faith adjusted to our world as well as or better than were the traditional dogmas adjusted to the world in which men formulated them. It is a task which fills with humility anyone who realizes what a precious cargo of human welfare is involved.



CHAPTER NINE

WHAT THE INTELLECTUAL CAN DO WITH INSTITUTIONAL RELIGION

IN CHAPTER II we saw that the individual in his religious development inevitably comes into contact with the group's habitual ways of expressing religion through institutions; that institutions sum up past experience in such a way as to conserve the energy that might go into repeating past developments; that religious institutions therefore serve as springboards for each new generation. These we have seen to be their contribution to individual growth. At the same time we noted three threats in the institution to personal religion: (1) that by insisting on uniform modes of expression it may ignore the uniqueness of the individual's experience; (2) that by identifying external forms with religious faith it may lose sight of the deeper quests of religion;

and (3) that it may cramp modes of religious expression today into outworn patterns of creed or ritual or organization.

Because of the risks, many intellectuals refuse to have anything to do with organized religion. Many others, of course, are not connected with the church or synagogue simply because of inertia and lack of social sense. It is a very serious matter that so many intellectuals accept little or nothing in the way of community responsibility. Often an education, frequently named "progressive," has failed to see that the individual personality is inextricable from social relations, and has wandered into an unpsychological individualism. The pupil may learn so thoroughly that the school, the teacher, the library, the college exists to serve him, that he becomes the most barefaced sort of social profiteer, exploiting for his own benefit all social enterprises which involve him. Coupled with this may be a mistaken notion that to be a superior person means to be a supercilious person, too highbrow for local affairs. Here belongs the sort of college teacher who deals in social reform at

long range, who discusses national political affairs with great *éclat* but cannot bother with the "silly little squabbles" in the college city's political order. College teachers of this sort, living merely in a world of big ideas, build up unreal social orders from which the ordinary folk living around them are excluded, and become blind leaders of students who in turn are unsocial and doomed to disillusionment in their home communities. It is *these* teachers who are the real threat to the younger generation.

Our problem in this chapter, however, is to discover what the socialized intellectual can do with organized religion. First of all we must analyze social institutions to see of what they consist. Only by such an analytical understanding of them can we know how to make adequate adjustments.

Any social institution has two phases (stated in slightly different form many years ago by W. G. Sumner in his *Folkways*): a purpose which it seeks to accomplish, and an organization through which this purpose is to be made effective. The state is an elaborate machinery of gov-

ernment to achieve effective corporate life for a national group. Marriage is an organized relation between two adults of different sexes for the purpose (and just here arises the difference of opinion in current sex ethics) either of raising children or of securing comprehensive satisfaction of longings for sex expression and for companionship.

Decline in any institution sets in, due to ineffectiveness either in purpose or in organization. Thus the Y. M. C. A. has often been criticized for losing sight of its purpose in an over-elaborate organization, while the Church is accused often of being inefficient in its organized effort to achieve its purpose. The social problems we confront are problems of clarifying the purpose or of strengthening the organization. As we saw in the preceding paragraph, our current problem in sex ethics is one of agreeing upon a definition of the purpose of marriage. Our political problems, on the other hand, very often emerge as problems in method of national organization.

In the history of religion (and, indeed,

of social life generally) the prophet always appears as one who calls the institution back to a recognition of its basic purpose. He may even go so far as to deny all value to organized forms, so as to disentangle the purpose from the organization machinery; but this is a part of prophetic exaggeration. Some righteous remnant of the institution is expected to survive. The prophet usually appears as antagonistic to the priest—Jeremiah against the priests of Anathoth, Jesus against Jewish officialdom, Paul against the would-be ecclesiasts of the Jerusalem Church, Luther against the papal system, Wesley against the Anglican orders, Rauschenbusch against a smug, other-worldly Protestantism. This is because the priest's task is the maintenance of religious institutions on their organizational side.

In religious development organization grows in response to the exigencies of geographic spread, of increasing variety in the group, or of external pressure such as persecution. When a small band becomes so large and widespread and heterogeneous that simple mutual understanding and

rapport are no longer possible, some media of communication and coöperation become necessary. (This may explain why the United States with its great variety of immigrant strains bears the reputation of a weakness for organizing everything.) Christian institutional organization grew with the geographic and cultural spread of the Gospel, and was greatly accelerated by early persecutions. The organization of religion develops along three lines—the organization of *personnel* into a grouping of laity and clergy, and among the clergy into a more or less elaborate hierarchy; the organization of *activity* into ritual and discipline; and the organization of *belief* in doctrines and dogmas.

The organization of personnel gives us the system of Church polity—an effort to arrange the believers according to schemes of political organization and in terms of accepted political theory current at the time. The Roman Catholic hierarchy, for instance, furnishes a striking parallel, rank for rank, to the political officialdom of the Roman Empire. When new political ideas emerge there is also apt to arise criticism

of the existing Church polity. When the individualistic implications of Protestantism became apparent proposals were made for new forms of Church government designed to be more democratic, as in Congregationalism.

Ritual is the organization of group behavior for purposes of attaining to an experience of God through worship. Yet ritual reflects, too, the current ideas of the etiquette of behavior in the presence of high superiors. In an article some years ago in *The Classical Journal* a writer showed how in some ancient religious monuments the type of salutation used for the deity—throwing a kiss—was that used for superiors. It appears also that the changes in Japanese court etiquette of kowtowing before the Emperor are to be seen also in Japanese Buddhist temples, where some still prostrate themselves, forehead to the floor, while others bow to the waist. In discipline, as the other form of organization of activity of the group, current mores are influential (although it is also true here that religion actually initiates mores by laying down its own

rules for treatment of "the brethren" within the cult).

Dean Shailer Mathews has pointed out in his books *The Faith of Modernism* and *Atonement and the Social Process* how doctrinal formulæ borrow their terms from analogies furnished by current social organization. To the later Hebrew, God was an Oriental despot; to Anselm he was a feudal baron; to others he was a judge, a creditor, or a father. Doctrines are attempts to make faith intellectually respectable in a given cultural environment. As the culture changes its intellectual atmosphere, doctrines change, because the generally prevalent assumptions of rational discussions must be the assumptions in effective theology. Perhaps a large part of our current theological difficulty is due to the conflict between a theology of absolute monarchy in which the king can do no wrong, and a democratic political theory which makes the ruler rule by consent of the governed.

Here, then, is the function of religious institutions—to make the purpose of religion more effective by relating it to cur-

rent social experience. This needs to be remembered when we are dealing with the great church doctrines and rites of the past. They deserve respect for the success they have had in making Christianity or Judaism acceptable in ages now gone. They served a function in their day. They still symbolize great historic experiences.

But dissatisfaction often asserts itself from within, and subgroups form which feel that some part of the institutional organization is not achieving the purpose for which the institution exists. This is how sects arise, whether as protests against church polity (Lutherans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists), against established ritual (Anabaptists, Puritans), or against orthodox doctrine (Unitarians, Universalists). When the main body of believers refuse to accede to the demands for change of polity, practice, or creed, the malcontents withdraw as a sect. Because of the threat to their distinct identity if they should yield their protest, they fight in order to maintain their own existence. The sect is essentially a conflict group, and conflict is the life blood of sectarian-

ism. If the sect becomes influential enough, or if the parent body refuses to fight it, the conflict psychology disappears and the sect becomes a denomination. Yet every denomination contains those who are ready to fight, even though the issue be a dead one; and so sectarian narrowness persists.

To sum up: Institutional religion is the group formulation of religious behavior; and it has important bearings on the development of personal religion. For we become personalities by living in groups, and group experience does much to mold our characters even though we become arch-critics of the group. The church is a mode of group religious expression, and it grows inevitably with growth in group experience. Church government reflects the social philosophy of its adherents, and there is a real relation historically between Protestantism and democracy. Worship is the process for collective emotionalizing of ideals; it makes the ideals of the group so precious that the worshiper cannot be content till those ideals are attained. This is why beauty and awesomeness are so

bound up in effective worship; they urge the worshiper on to æsthetic satisfaction. Ethical worship presupposes an ethical ideal, but that ideal must be clothed in beauty to be worshiped. The biblical writer adjures us to "worship the Lord in the *beauty* of holiness," and John Dewey's great religious fervor emerges in that last chapter of *Reconstruction in Philosophy* where he paints his lovely utopia of the democratic life.

Doctrine, again, is the group's interpretation of its religious experience in terms of general social knowledge. Doctrine aims to make belief intelligible to current thought by using suggestive analogies. When social knowledge changes, new analogies may be needed, and this is why we have a *history* of doctrine.

If religious institutions can continue to achieve their age-old function of consolidating the gains in group experience of religion and making adjustments to current life and thought, then they will become agencies of experimentation. They will also give concreteness to the nebulous ideal by making it an intelligible idea,

by embodying it in programs of social action, and by investing it with vivid loveliness.

II

What, then, can the intellectual do with organized religion? Faced with benighted Sunday-school teachers, or feeble preaching or impossible rites of worship, what can he do? Unfortunately, the intellectual is himself apt to draw very hasty generalizations upon limited acquaintance. The writer once asked a college class what they thought of the social effectiveness of the church. With one accord they branded the church guilty of inaction. Then he asked how many of them had heard of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America. Though they were amused by the cumbersome title, not one of them raised a hand. And they had decided that the church was inactive and futile! There is a pose of superficial superiority which has become conventional among intellectuals, but which is totally unworthy of their training and knowledge. The first thing the intellectual can do with organ-

ized religion is to investigate it, to discover what is actually being done by the Federal Council of Churches, the American Council of Rabbis and the National Catholic Welfare Council, by the Committee on International Friendship through the Churches, to name only a few of the agencies through which religion is actually tackling problems of social, economic, and international relations.

The next step for the intellectual to take will be his hardest, for he is usually eager to move on to the third step of reconstructing institutional religion. This second step is, however, essential to the third. It is the effort to understand how church folk feel about their religious creeds and practices. To achieve this understanding the intellectual must "decentralize" himself, for modern education has made him the center of the educational process. Thus he is often unable to take his modest place in social institutions. He expects people to place their wares before him for his choice, and he tends to expect preferential treatment from the church. Now, granted that he is in a position to

give valuable aid to the church, he must at least know what he is going to help. Sociology has recently acquired a new term that is of great importance in this connection—the participant observer. The point is this: the social observer cannot observe fully unless he is able to observe how people *feel* in certain groups. To do this he must identify himself with these groups, he must actually participate in the life of farmers if he is to understand why it is so difficult for farmers' coöperatives to succeed.

All sound readjustment rests upon an understanding of the processes involved; medical cure must be preceded by diagnosis; re-education of those suffering from nervous disorders demands first a thorough understanding of the patient's mental outlook and aberrations. In the same way, he who seeks to reconstruct religion (or even to reconstruct social life in general) must first understand the religious attitudes of other people. To do this requires much patience and a willingness to listen while others talk. Unfortunately, the intellectual is often so eager to tell people

where they are wrong that he does not wait long to let them explain what they find in a communion service, or what it means to them to say the Apostles' Creed, or what the Day of Atonement signifies to them, or why they think it is that attendance at church on Sunday makes them "feel better for the rest of the week." Or the preacher is condemned for temporizing in his sermon, without the critic's stopping to discover whether his sermon was being preached for a recently bereaved family, for some member overwhelmed by a business failure, or for some parent whose son's "heresy" was breaking her heart.

Very often, too, in his attitude toward traditional symbolic rites or phrases, the intellectual needs to gain historical perspective. He may think the Nicene Creed quite impossibly archaic, but, after all, it *did* at one stage in Church history save Christianity from being lost in polytheism. And the Eucharist has meant much more in people's experience than what the intellectual calls "eating up a god in rank superstition"; indeed, it began as a sym-

bol of Christian fellowship and not as a magical consuming of the Lord. Though the Law, against which many Jews rail for its impossible dietary and ablutionary regulations, may now seem hopelessly outworn, there was a day when, amid persecution, "the wall of the Law" preserved the integrity of a great race and its sublime religion.

Yet we do not have to accept what we understand. But, if we understand it we can then—and then alone—proceed to improve it. Institutional religion thrives on symbols (as does any institution), and these symbols stand to the adherents for the values of very definite experiences; the symbols become the nuclei of attitudes. Therefore, to know the meaning of symbols is to know what they mean to the churchman. But churchmen are a motley group, drawn from all sorts of social groups. They give a cross section of the real society in which the intellectual must live, and realism demands that he know how they feel about those symbols. Sympathetic insight is therefore required if we are to be realistic in our social relations,

our church relations. And sympathy is gained by deliberate exercise of imagination fed by actual watchful listening while the other tells his tale. To do this means to go to church not as a detached spectator, but with definite effort to understand how the worshipers feel about the service. And this takes time and patience and regular attendance with the group.

When this has been achieved the intellectual is a real participant-observer and ready to make his contribution. (Be it remembered that he can scarcely *decide* to have relations, for as a member of the community he is already related. He may decide not to send Billy to a conservative Sunday school; but if Tommy has been and tells Billy at play what he learned, Billy's father is related to that Sunday school without *deciding* to be!) His contribution is not a gift from his isolated self to the church of which he can be totally independent. Rather, it is his share in the community which is making continuous impress upon him and his family.

What can be his contribution? It can be the contribution of the insider with out-

side experience. All the prophets were that—insiders with outside experience. This contribution lies in reinterpreting the symbols of religion, in so using them as to integrate them in the experience of the wide world which his training has revealed to him. To do this effectively he must be able to conserve the emotional power of the old symbols while giving them a new intellectual content. A mere shifting of theological terminology will not do; a deeper reconstruction is needed. This is why the intellectual who seeks to make religious institutions intelligent and modern must know what emotions they embody. To announce baldly that a certain creed or rite is nonsense, and that the church must scrap it, is stupid psychology. To find out what the church is really looking for and then to "show a more excellent way" of achieving this end, this is the way progress has come. Folks are rightly nervous about scrapping precious symbols, but they are more confident of change when the values of the symbols are conserved in the new proposals.

This is the Church's challenge to the in-

tellectual—to give it new ideals more appealing than the old, new hopes more virile than the old, new faiths more certain than the old. It is the task of institutional religion, with such help, to consolidate idealism into a comprehensive faith.



INDEX

- Adjustment, religion as, 123 f.
Adolescence, heresies of, 48
Adventure, 86-88
Agnosticism, 2, 41
Astronomy, 154
Attitudes, growth of, 9-15
 of God-belief, 59
 relation to institutions, 22
 religious, 8, 9, 16, 58
 religious, growth of, Chap. II
 religious, relation to religious institutions, 23 f.

Bacon, Roger, 154
Behaviorism, religious implications, 3
Belief, 72, 157, 166
 and over-belief, 72 f.
 in unverifiable, 73

Case, S. J., 113-118
Christianity, history of, 141-160
Church. *See also* Institutions, religious
 growth of, 150
 organization, 166
Complexes, 6
Conditioned responses, 12
Conservatism, 157 f.

- Constantine, 149
Conviction, 90
Cosmos, 41, 44, 63, 66, 78, 80, 81, 83, 96, 98 f.
Cynicism, 41, 65, 136
- Darwin, 123
Deists, 64
Dewey, John, 4, 171
Discontent, 32
Doctrines, 166, 168, 171
 relation to emotions, 54-56
Dogmatism, 41
- Education, progressive, 162
Emotions, 10 f., 16, 24, 48, 51, 53, 57, 59, 88, 178
 fixation of, 8, 73
 satisfaction of, 42 f., 86-90
 transfer of, 13 f., 18, 47, 53 f.
Enthusiasm, 90
Euthenics, definition of, 3 f.
 relation to religion, 4-6
- Faith, 24, 41, 51, 57, 77, 86-91, 160, 179
 meanings of, 36-41
 not complacency, 39
Fixations. *See* Emotions, fixation of
Fosdick, 54
Fundamentalists, 36, 50
- Genius, 37, 112 f., 119, 121 f.
God, assurance of safety, 61 f.
 belief in, 89 f.
 changing ideas of, 68, 79, 127-133
 conserver of values, 62 f.

God—(*Continued*)

- cosmic companion, 64-66
- embodiment of values, 77-80
- explanation of origins, 63 f.
- kingdom of, 80, 132, 144, 149
- knowledge of, 71
- modern ideas of, 96
- personal experience of, 66 f.
- reasons given for belief in, 59-67
- source of Jesus' power, 59-61

Gods, origin of, 127

Heresies, 148

- of adolescence, 48

Heretics, 23

Highbrows, 162 f., 172

History of religions, 156

Hocking, W. E., 58

Ideals, 5, 28, 44, 78, 179

- and daydreaming, 32
- and emotions, 30 f.
- and stability, 33
- born of discontent, 31
- church the custodian of, 28
- God as guarantor of, 62 f.
- nature of, 28, 29
- of science, 4
- origin of, 30

Infantilism in religion, 19, 20, 47-49

- danger of, 50 f.
- escape from, 51-57

Institutional religion, analysis of, 166-172

- function of, 22, 168 f.

- Institutional religion—(*Continued*)
 relation to personal religion, 22-26
 rise of, 165
- Institutions, decline of, 164
 function of, 20 f., 22, 26
 nature of, 163 f.
- Intellectualism, 53
- Intellectuals, and organized religion, Chap. IX,
 161-163, 172-179
 as exploiters, 162
 need of historical perspective, 175
- Jesus, 37 f., 55, 59-61, 107-122, 141-144
 a myth? 113-118
 as leader, 119-122
- Kingdom of God. *See* God, kingdom of; Utopias
Krueger, E. T., 119
- Legend, distinguished from myth, 117
- Liberal theology, 6, 52, 54
 failure of, 53
- Life, meaning of. *See* Meaning of Life
- Mana*, 125-128
- Marx, 32
- Mathews, Shailer, 168
- Meaning of life, 7, 8, 25, 41, 52, 57, 89, 102
- Miracles, 6
 in the Gospels, 107-113
- Modernists, 50, 53, 54
 See also Liberal theology
- Mystery cults, 146
- Mysticism, 28, 56, 66, 94 f., 102, 152, 157, 159
- Myth, distinguished from legend, 117

- Natural law, 110
- Newton, Isaac, 155
- Nicene Creed, 150, 175
- Old Testament, 128-138
- Papacy, rise of, 151
- Participant observer, 174
- Patriotism, 14
- Paul, 49, 145-148
- Personality, breadth of, 43
 - depth of, 43 f.
 - integration of, 42-44, 47, 51 f., 88
- Perspective, 33
- Philosophy, 85
 - and belief in God, 69 ff.
 - of life, suggestions for a, 80-85
- Plato, 28
- Poise, 39-40, 42, 57, 106
 - prayer and, 105 f.
- Powys, John Cowper, 106
- Pragmatism, 72
- Prayer, 7, 24, Chap. VI
 - and poise, 105 f.
 - and science, 95-97
 - kinds of, 92-95
 - of communion, 93 f., 98-100
 - of confession, 94, 100
 - of consecration, 95, 103 f.
 - of meditation, 94 f., 102 f.
 - of petition, 93, 97 f.
 - of thanksgiving, 94, 100-102
- Prestige, 126
- Prophet, 23, 129, 132 f., 143 f., 165, 178

Protestantism, 153 ff.

Psychiatry, 6, 13, 19 f., 67, 100, 111, 174

Psychology, and belief in God, 72-74, 156 f.

Religion, an opiate, 32

and euthenics, 4-6

and modern science, 4, 5, 154-159

as a philosophy of life, 85

Christian, 141-160

defining of, 27

function of, 32-36, 44, Chap. III

Hebrew, 128-145

primitive, 125-128

reactions to crisis, 157-159

stereotyped forms of, 17

See also Attitudes, religious

Religious attitudes. *See* Attitudes, religious

Religious experience, an individual matter, 17 f.

based on education, 18 f., 20

See also Attitudes, religious

Religious institutions. *See* Institutional religion

Religious response, 16

Repression, 42, 145 f.

manifestations of, 49-50, 57, 145 f.

Revolutionists, 158

Ritual, 151, 157, 166, 167, 170. *See also* Symbols

Romanticists, 158

Schleiermacher, 158

Scholasticism, 151

Schweitzer, A., 115

Science, 4, 67

and God, 69 f.

and miracles, 110 f.

Science—(*Continued*)

and prayer, 95-97

and religious infantilism, 48

function of, 5

limitations of, 75, 99, 104 f.

method of, 74-77

relation to religion, 4, 5, 8, 26, 36, 47, 154-159

relations with theology, 154-159

Sects, 148, 169 f.

Security, 90

Sensitivity, 10, 31, 44, 100, 102, 105, 124

Sentiment, religious. *See* Attitudes, religious

Sentimentalism, 53

Sociology, 156 f., Chap. IX

Soul, 126-127

Stability, 35, 43

Sumner, W. G., 163

Supernatural, 96 f., 107, 109

Symbols, 175-177. *See also* Ritual

Thinking, rise of, 11 f.

wishful, 61 f., 83

Transfer of emotions. *See* Emotions, transfer ofUniverse. *See* Cosmos

Utopias, 29, 34, 80, 83, 132

function of, 31 f.

See also God, kingdom of

Values, 5, 7, 26, 52

and the idea of God, 77-80, 89

God the guarantor of, 62

key to philosophy of life, 80-85

Values—(*Continued*)

relation to attitudes, 45 f.

relation to doctrines, 74

Whitehead, A. N., 29

Wishful thinking, 61 f., 83

Worship. *See* Ritual; Symbols





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